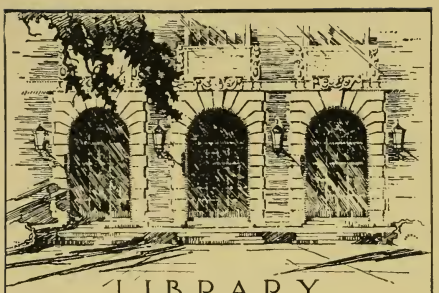

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THE TWO HOMES.

VOL. II.

THE TWO HOMES.

BY

WILLIAM MATHEWS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF VALLIS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE TWO HOMES.

CHAPTER XXI.

"THERE, you must be ready to accompany me at twelve o'clock; please to order your carriage for the occasion," said Mr. Graham, tossing a note to his wife, as he entered the breakfast room.

"What's up now?" thought Elpingstone; "he looks as irascible as a hornet."

"That he should be in England at so critical a moment!" muttered Mr. Graham, as he took his seat at the table.

Mrs. Graham took up her glass, looked at her husband, and then at the note, to see what had

occasioned his ill-humour, although she was accustomed to it of late; she read—

"Dear Sir,

"If convenient, I should be obliged by you calling upon me in the course of to-morrow.

"Faithfully yours,

"William Wynne Ryland."

"Hatchet's Hotel, Tuesday, p. m."

"Read it, George," Mr. Graham said, with a meaning look.

Mrs. Graham handed the laconic note to her brother, saying—

"A mighty fuss about nothing. I have an engagement; my carriage goes in another direction."

"Your carriage, madam, will go where I please. What do you say to that, Elpingstone?"

"I half expected this; the same man who looked in upon me in the "Chinese room" last week, and wished me a pleasant day, but gave no name. I wonder if he has brought the daugh-

ter with him, half-gazelle, half-tiger, without bones."

"It's no joking matter, I can tell you," said Mr. Graham, tartly.

"That is just why we should face it boldly. What do you mean to do?"

"Obey his summons, I suppose."

"And what is to follow?"

"God knows."

"Come—come, Graham, don't be cast down; when in doubt lead a trump. Get him here, make him your esteemed guest, get some of our swell friends about him, treat him like a friend, and if the wild Ada is with him, I will take her under my especial care."

"You forget," said Mr. Graham, with moody significance.

"I forget nothing," answered Elpingstone. "But he knows nothing—cannot know anything, whilst Granny Wolf is in Madeira, and she has left *the packet* in Emily's hands."

A shudder passed over Mr. Graham's face, his teeth shone between his lips, the cup of coffee

he was conveying to his mouth trembled like a leaf in the wind. Just then nurse Pitman entered the room, saying very curtly:

"Miss Seaton is too unwell to breakfast with you;" then went away.

Elpingstone spoke to his sister in a low voice.

"No; you will not get *her* out of the way," exclaimed Mr. Graham, who had evidently overheard the whisper; "and I strictly prohibit your going any further in that affair; I pledged my word to Miss Weston, and by it, come what will, I will stand."

Elpingstone looked sharply out of his clear blue eye, yet smiled.

"Are you so deep, Mr. Graham? Yes, yes, I can see a way for you out of all this, but then I should be left in the lurch; we shall see." He thought this, but he kept it to himself.

At twelve o'clock, Mrs. Graham's equipage *was* in readiness to convey her and her husband to Piccadilly. On arriving at Hatchet's, and enquiring for Mr. Ryland, they were shown into one of Thomas's best apartments, and into the pre-

sence of a girl who stood before a mirror, coquetting with a bird of brilliant plumage, which she held on her wrist.

"You see how beautiful you are," said the lady to her pet, as she held it close to the mirror. "Papa calls Ada his Indian lily, and you are my Indian rose;" she kissed the bird, breathing with musical cadence some sentences of a language with which Mr. and Mrs. Graham's ears were not familiar. She did not seem conscious of the presence of the visitors, and they stood gazing at her with mixed feelings of surprise and admiration. Her form was that of a girl of eighteen, rather tall, lithe, delicately proportioned, and singularly flexile. Long dark tresses, glossy and abundant, fell with careless grace over her shoulders. The head was small, and rarely formed, as it drooped a little at one side, with a conscious smile at its own beauty reflected in the mirror; the look and attitude were very marked and individual. Hearing a movement near, the girl started from her graceful position, and gazed eagerly round. The face spoke of a fiery, untamed soul within; low

brows, eyes long, and deeply blue, of an almond shape, and shining like a star, with the pupil much larger than common; the nose light and delicate, and a little prominent at the nostril; the mouth with its wave and curve somewhat long, and wonderfully expressive; the complexion of a creamy tint, but slightly darker, and of a softness unknown to the English countenance; a warm glow came over this strange face.

"I do not know you," she said, approaching Mrs. Graham with a little reluctance. "If you seek papa you must wait."

The words were less graceful than the manner. There was a girlish timidity in the latter, a native unschooled modesty, that was very attractive.

"Is Mr. Ryland your papa?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"My own dearest papa," she replied, with an energy which called up more of the fiery life that glowed in her veins.

"He will be here presently without doubt," said Mrs. Graham, and, observing the eyes of the strange being light up with a gleam, she

turned and saw a gentleman coming calmly forward, nodding to the girl with a proud smile upon his lip.

"I must apologise for making you wait." Pray, be seated. My daughter Ada. Mrs. Graham, I presume."

Mr. Ryland was a man of middle age, perhaps forty-five or forty-six; quiet, self-possessed, rather gentle than otherwise. His person was tall and manly, with a sun-browned, intelligent, self-possessed countenance. He was evidently a man of action. The conversation commenced with tact on both sides.

"I am really very much disposed to be angry with you, Mr. Ryland," said Mr. Graham, blandly, "for not having intimated to me your intention of visiting this country, or at least placing me in possession of the fact of your arrival directly on your landing. I would have met you at Southampton with great pleasure, and perhaps have facilitated those unpleasant delays at the Custom House with which I am more familiar than you."

Mr. Ryland bowed and smiled, and said—

"You are very good. I was in haste on landing to make a little expedition into the country."

Then he looked grave, and for a minute or two there was a dull, flat silence. However, Mr. Graham brightened up.

"Well, now we have met, we don't part very easily. Mrs. Graham and myself must insist on your making Grosvenor Square your headquarters, until you can arrange about your residence."

"Nothing could be more consonant with my feelings," answered Mr. Ryland, rather to Mr. Graham's surprise and somewhat to his chagrin. "To-morrow, if you please, we will avail ourselves of your hospitality. An inn is not the most agreeable home for one so unused to life as my Ada. Thanks, Mrs. Graham; not a word as to preparations; we are used to take things as they are, and Grosvenor Square is a residence for a king." Then Mr. Ryland had been there!

Mrs. Graham and Ada made but little progress. After some talking, mostly on Mrs. Graham's part,

she said, in her pleasantest way, meaning to compliment the young foreigner—

"How admirably you speak English!"

"I detest its sound; to my sense, it is like the climate to my feelings; and if you speak truth, papa must be in error, for he says I snap at my English as if I should like to bite it. I tell him I would do so if I could kill it."

Mrs. Graham quite started. The Indian girl spoke so vividly, and so much as if she meant it.

"You will appreciate our tongue more when it has grown more familiar to your ear."

"Your tongue, as you call it, ought to be shampooed; it is so rheumatic and gouty, and hard and stubborn, and full of bones. Were you ever shampooed?"

Mrs. Graham looked half frightened.

"Do I look rheumatic and gouty, and hard and stubborn, and full of bones?" she asked, making the best of her figure, of which she was not a little proud.

"A little; but less than many English ladies I have seen walking. To your language and

your ladies shampooing would do great good. Ah! if you knew Hindostanee, I would explain to you how music and the stars teach those who can learn it how to walk and speak, and love and hate."

Mr. Ryland spoke quickly in the tongue his daughter mentioned; whereupon she left her seat, and sank upon the floor by him, resting her folded hands upon his knee, and gazing up into his face with a look of singular earnestness. There was so much of unconscious grace in the attitude, so much feeling in that strange wild face, that Mrs. Graham could not help being startled from her usual worldly indifference.

CHAPTER XXII.

Mr. Ryland and Ada, with her bird on her shoulder, presented themselves in Grosvenor Square on the afternoon following the invitation. Of course, there was a party hastily assembled in honour of Mr. Ryland. The Sliverys, in spite of recent impressions; Mr. Finch, who was always at command; the Honourable Mr. Kenyon, now Mr. Graham's aversion and Mrs. Graham's pet, and who was too often at Grosvenor Square, as Mrs. Slivery hinted to her latest friend, the Lady Henrietta Weedle; Elpingstone was one of the family, and two or three others to fill up the dinner-table. Mrs. Graham had taken possession of Ada on her arrival, and was still absent from the room when Mr. Graham

introduced his esteemed friend Mr. Ryland to the gentlemen assembled.

Elpingstone and Mr. Ryland had met before. The former was right in his conjecture that this was not Mr. Ryland's first visit to Grosvenor Square. Mr. Slivery was most urbane in his advances. Mr. Slivery could tell at less than a glance if a man was worth his notice. Horses were spoken of.

"I want to buy," Mr. Ryland said.

Finch elbowed Slivery.

"I know where you could be suited to a T," observed Slivery, with animation.

"U, you mean," suggested Elpingstone.

"But I want, at fifty, horses worth a hundred," said Mr. Ryland, drily.

"Then Slivery *is* your man," cried Elpingstone.

"What do you mean, Sir George?" asked Mr. Slivery, very civilly, but looking a little blue.

"You like to accommodate your friends with ten shillings in the pound, don't you?" Elping-

stone's blue eye sparkled with more malice than humour. It was a rough hit. Slivery felt tender since his promotion to the Carlton in regard to early days.

"Had you there, eh, old boy?" said Mr. Finch confidentially to Slivery, of course at the moment Slivery was getting over it.

The door opened, and the ladies of the household entered. Elpingstone gazed on Ada in extreme amazement. His eyes spoke his admiration. "Without bones!" he muttered; and it took him a little while to recover himself so as to advance with his accustomed ease and seek an introduction to this singularly strange and fascinating girl. Mr. Finch half whistled a little air, then looked at Minnie; then took her hand in his.

"Dear child," he said, gently, "you are looking ill, I am sure; 'gad so, something wrong. Pining for Miss Weston, mayhap? I must write and tell her." Whereupon he led her to a chair with quite a grace. Finch had a heart—but for brandy-and-water, a sound one.

Mr. Ryland met Finch on his return with marked cordiality.

"You know Miss Seaton?" he said, in a low uneven voice.

"Yes; since she was the height of your knee—the sweetest, dearest child that ever lived; but something is wrong, very wrong, there's no doubt about it."

Dinner was announced. Mrs. Graham, on Mr. Ryland's arm, waited as her guests filed past. Elpingstone had charge of Ada. Minnie was alone—no gentleman had been apportioned to her. She was moving after the company, when Mr. Ryland turned hastily to Mrs. Graham and said—

"You will permit me?" and he quite drew poor Minnie within the protection of his disengaged arm, without speaking, however; as yet Minnie and he had not exchanged a word. A look of deep gratefulness and comfort stole over Minnie's gentle face, and she trembled; but the glance that was bent down upon her appeared to reassure her, although she was aware that the

gentleman who had shown such kind consideration was the same who had been the means of breaking up that painful interview with Sir George Elpingstone, and had felt, of course, when she made the discovery, that she could never venture to meet his eye again. Now, as before, his manner, or something in the expression of his countenance strangely affected her imagination. By a manœuvre of Mrs. Graham, Minnie was separated from her self-constituted protector, and compelled to take a seat on the opposite side of the table. Mr. Kenyon manœuvred likewise, and shifted from Mrs. Slivery's left to her right side, and so sat next to our little friend. Mrs. Graham saw this and frowned. Mr. Ryland's eyes were fixed upon Minnie in a kind of brooding meditation.

"A dream!" he muttered; "but only a dream. My heart says otherwise, but not my reason."

"A sweet face," said Mr. Ryland, in a low voice, to the hostess, seeing her eyes even following his. "How loveably marked with gentleness, candour, and intelligence!"

"The pearl of my company," Mrs. Graham answered. Then looking at Ada, she added,—"But there sits my ruby. What passionate enthusiasm in those eyes! Oh, those eyes!"

Mr. Ryland turned to observe how Ada was getting on: he was evidently uncomfortable about *her*. Ada's strange lustrous eyes were fixed upon her companion, but flashing with an expression of defiance rather than of pleasure.

"I have anxiously anticipated your arrival; my conjectures are radiant with triumph," said Elpingstone to her.

"I must ask for an explanation. I do not understand you."

"Then I must tell you that nature has wonderfully perfected the picture you sketched so artistically two years ago."

"What picture?"

"I have never forgotten it—so striking, so artistic. Mr. Graham gave it to me, and I shall never part with it."

Ada looked at the speaker with singular softness, only for a moment—then the eyes sank.

"It was a cold time when I did it," she said, touchingly; "I felt then, as I said, I was a half-mad child. Should I have made myself an angel as bright and soft as a star?" and she looked very sad.

"Your star must light you to happiness," observed Elpingstone, scarcely knowing what to say.

"My star is accursed," Ada answered, with startling frankness; and then a sort of mistiness came over her face, shrouding it in such sudden gloom, that it appeared as if the thought she had expressed was a belief invested with the force and authority of an instinct. Mr. Ryland's scrutiny was not satisfactory, as amid the bustle and the talking he gazed from Minnie to Ada. The former had heard every word of Ada's.

Mr. Ryland sighed.

"Yes; great changes have taken place in London since my last sojourn in it," answered Mr. Ryland, to a remark of Mrs. Graham's. "But the change affects the sight more than the imagination. London is always London.

You hinted just now that Miss Seaton was your guest. I should say she had been reared amidst the genial influences of country life, and now her health appears to suffer from the change."

"She is a *protégée* of a Miss Weston—'Granny Wolf' we call her, a relative of Mr. Graham's, living at Eling, a village some twelve miles from town. 'Granny Wolf' is now in Madeira, nursing Mr. Graham's son, a great invalid; so we take charge of the little provincial for the time being. She pines for Granny's return, or she is perhaps jealous, as ladies are prone to be when one whom they have trusted proves recreant."

Mr. Ryland observed that Mr. Kenyon was listening, and that he looked a little confused as Mrs. Graham gazed fixedly at him.

"A generous act in Miss Weston," Mr. Ryland said.

"Oh! she has the most romantic notions about Edward;—for a 'Granny Wolf,' the most absurd, I assure you." Mrs. Graham's voice had not been guarded. Minnie heard a portion of this

remark, and as Mr. Ryland's eye fell upon her he saw she was looking at him with a pleading earnestness, and that her eyes were filled with tears.

"May I have the pleasure of a glass of wine with you, Mr. Ryland?" Mr. Graham asked, from the bottom of the table.

"With pleasure!"

Mrs. Graham smiled somewhat saucily, and said: "Mr. Graham will observe that troublesome formality."

"Pardon me," Mr. Ryland answered, after bowing to his host, "if I say I do not consider it a troublesome formality. It tends yet more to destroy the isolation of eating, and make dining a social occupation. I am old-fashioned enough to like it."

Mrs. Graham lifted her eyebrows; but carried it off with a laugh as Mr. Ryland added, "We do it in pale ale in India."

Mr. Ryland did not enter with any spirit into the "small-talk" of the hour. His feelings seemed not to be in harmony with the tone of conversa-

tion, or in sympathy with the people with whom he was associated. He was, to a great degree, taciturn, and, perhaps not altogether at his ease. Although he was evidently observant, he looked like a man whose thoughts are confused, and his mind troubled, and who strives unsuccessfully to conform to the spirit of the hour.

"You must endeavour to get a place for me for a few minutes by that sweet girl on yonder sofa. She is meditating a retreat, only that she has not nerve to rise and walk across the room." Mr. Ryland said this to his daughter, who had come up to him as he stood leaning against the chimney-piece in the drawing-room, sipping his coffee.

"Why should she go away, papa?—she is in beautiful society," the Indian girl replied, as she looked impatiently towards Minnie, who appeared confused and troubled as Elpingstone bent over her.

"Because they are pestering her to sing, and she lacks the courage to do so."

"I will sing for her. Let them open the

windows for me to see the stars, and I will talk to them in my own loved tongue."

"Not for worlds, Ada! You little know what society is made of. On no account must you sing, remember, without my sanction. Now do as I ask you."

"I do not like her, papa; she behaves to me as if I frightened her," said Ada, pettishly.

"Hush, Ada! Take care what you say; we are among strangers. What is it between you? She is unhappy, Ada; and when you are so, you love sympathy."

"*I* was. *I* was unhappy when I sat by her. I feel so in looking at her. I know not why, but we are enemies. When I talked to her about the spiritual mystery of my star, she said the spiritual mystery she had faith in was God's Providence, and her voice trembled and she almost burst into tears. She would do for a female missionary; but never, never for Ada's friend."

"Poor Ada!" observed the father, sadly, "to deserve friendship we must be first our own true

friend; and this you are not. Pray, do not talk to that sweet girl of stars and their mysteries: her sad orphan look seems to haunt me. You have listened far too aptly to the Indian lore about them. That girl could teach you better wisdom. Go and sit by her awhile; speak gently to her; tell her your father wants to talk to her. If her sensitiveness seems to shrink from a stranger, as I must seem to her, tell her I was once her father's most valued friend."

After a few minutes had elapsed, in spite of Mrs. Graham's manœuvring, Mr. Ryland was seated by Minnie's side.

Music commenced: Ada was gone. She could seldom sit a minute in one place when there was any cause of excitement; when there was not, she was graceful indolence itself.

Mr. Ryland possessed the art of winning confidence. He spoke so naturally and feelingly to Minnie that she soon came to regard him as one in whom she could rely. He went so far, after some pleasant chat, as to say he had been at Eling, and wishing to see Miss Weston,

had paid a visit to Alegria. Nep and Roger had shown him over it. As Minnie's face glowed with feeling and wonder, he said, earnestly—

"Do you remember anything of your existence prior to your residence at Eling?"

"No—yes: I have a recollection, I think, of hearing in my very young days, when we lived at Bales, some talk about other countries: Madeira—Spain—I hardly know."

"Madeira! Are you quite sure? Does the name seem familiar to you?"

"Oh! so familiar," Minnie cried, with a bright glow suddenly lighting up her face, which died away and left her cheek deadly pale.

"Are you unwell?" Mr. Ryland said, looking anxiously at her.

"No, no; it has passed. I thought of dear friends in Madeira. Shall I ever see them again?" Minnie looked troubled.

"I must see Miss Weston shortly. Would you like to accompany me to Madeira?" asked Mr. Ryland, earnestly. Minnie did not speak. Her

companion added in a whisper, seeing Elpingstone near—"Is this marriage—pardon me, as your father's old friend, I am deeply interested in your welfare—that is spoken of between you and Sir George Elpingstone, shortly to take place?"

"No! no! no! at least I am bewildered. I have lost all power of will. I know not how I am situated. I want mamma sadly; I am very—very miserable," burst from Minnie's lips, with sorrowful emphasis.

"Ha! is it so? Poor girl! you need a friend. I have arrived in England most opportunely. When we have leisure to-morrow, you will tell me all about it frankly. I am, as I have told you, your friend. I was your father's friend. Will you tell me your mind before you go further in this apparently strange affair?"

"I will—I will! I can scarcely comprehend all you mean and wish, or my own feelings, but I am very grateful," Minnie added, with a sigh. "Oh! that dear mamma Weston had never left me!"

"You shall go to her. Miss Weston will rejoice at my determination. We will arrange it all on the morrow. Now I will not agitate you further."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Soon after Miss Weston's arrival in Madeira, she removed Edward from Fanal to one of the pretty quintas in the Mount road—a quinta called the Vigia, on account of the beautiful view it commanded—an earthly elysium,

"Where the rose ever blossoms, the beam ever shines."

Markwell procured Miss Weston two Portuguese domestics who spoke a little English; and her practical good sense made a home of Vigia in a very short time. Women like Miss Weston carry home with them everywhere, they are so comfortable in themselves; and with that blessing in household management, order—heaven's first law—they impart it to others, and sunshine is the result. Nothing in the way of residence in any part of the

world is more easy of management than a little home in Madeira. Whether it be the sun, the necessity of thinking *only* a little, the absence of fires and carpets, the accommodating disposition of your tradesmen, or the gentle, good-natured bearing of the Portuguese domestic, or all together, I can hardly say; but one thing is certain, these invalid homes are easily put in order and kept in order, particularly if the English servant (if an invalid has the misfortune to have one with him) respects the prejudices of the Portuguese, as he looks for his own to be respected.

Edward's strange nervous visitation had yielded in a great degree to Markwell's treatment and the comfort of Miss Weston's presence. Besides, there had been a clear bright week in the mountains; and as, during the latter period of Edward's illness, the Madeira Alegria (associating itself as it did with his memory of that much loved home in England, blended in fancied identity with it indeed, from the peculiar state of his mind,) had been his dream, his talk, his object of interest, Markwell endeavoured, through the kindness of

the owner of the property, to remove him for a few days to the mountain cottage. The Madeira Alegria is far up in the bosom of the glorious mountain crescent that encircles the south side of the island, rising some eighteen hundred feet above the sea. It lies at the edge of a slope or ridge almost overhanging a wild, rugged, picturesque ravine. Chesnuts and pine-trees, broom with its gold sheets of flowers at all seasons, and the primitive cottages of some semi-mountaineers, cover the district. The pretty pink cottage still, as for years past, is a point of great attraction to those visitors to the island who have a love for the picturesque and beautiful in mountain scenery. To this change Edward owed much; there he acknowledged to have seen sunshine again; there he gave his kind friend Markwell, with all grateful earnestness, the *seven* shakes of the hand; and from subsequent occurrences as well, the Madeira Alegria ever after teemed with associations to him of the most interesting nature.

Both Edward and Miss Weston now grew impatient for news from Grosvenor Square; Ed-

ward had been four months in the island. The last letter he received was a month old; and it said not a word touching the state of affairs in Mincing Lane. From watching the signs of the "Times," he felt confident that trouble was at hand, although he was not made acquainted with the fact. Miss Weston, too, was anxious. She had been a month in the island; one letter only had she received from Minnie, and its tone certainly augmented her apprehension of trouble. Thus had Minnie written:—

"It grieves me to tell you, mamma, that I am not happy. I am not satisfied with myself, or with those with whom I am living. I cannot at all understand my position. One day I am told I shall be compelled to seek a situation as governess; another, I am agitated with insinuations about Sir George's affection for me. I am petted one day and frightened the next; and indeed but for dear nurse Pitman I think I should have resigned myself to their dictation. You must tell Edward I am unworthy of his love. Sir George has spoken to me about what he said to you at

Alegria; and he said I should be Edward's ruin, his misery, *if*—but you know what I mean; how dreadful to think of it! And you once said almost as much. But, indeed, I would sooner steal away and never see a human face again than be *that;* I would consent to their wishes rather than stand in the way of Edward's happiness. Indeed I know not what to do; I am quite unfit to be alone, I was never a fit judge for myself. I always required some one whom I loved and trusted to tell me what was right to do,—then I could do it."

There was more; mention was made of the visit of the stranger at Grosvenor Square, and the writer confessed that his manner was very singular. Altogether it was an unsatisfactory note, conveying intelligence fitted to alarm the anxious heart of her friend; for it was evident that the pliant nature of Minnie's feelings had been so worked upon that she had become scarcely a free agent.

"Traitors all!" Miss Weston said to herself, and resolved on being speedily among them to

counteract their machinations. Fortunately for her, egress from Madeira for a few months after Christmas is not always easy. In this state of inquietude and indignation, Miss Weston acted like herself. She said not a word to Edward about Minnie, for she knew how deeply excited and distressed he would be were she to share with him the intelligence she had received. All she said to Edward was—

"Now that I see you daily improving in health, I am satisfied; I wish to return to England as soon as possible. Duty beckons me back to Alegria."

Edward and Markwell did their best to secure a passage for Miss Weston on board a man-of-war, but failed. They succeeded, however, with an American ship bound for Liverpool; and matters were arranged for her to embark on the following day, when the bi-monthly mail arrived, and the most unexpected communications came with it. Three letters came to the Vigia addressed to Miss Weston. The superscriptions of two were in familiar hands; but the third address was in the writing of a stranger, although she thought

was she had seen it before. Mrs. Graham's letter first perused. After some matter relative to herself and her child, she referred to Edward's state:

"Poor fellow," Mrs. Graham wrote, "the loss of reason is a dreadful thing. I shall resist to the last the idea of placing him in an asylum, remember that. George is very much concerned about him; and I assure you it is somewhat singular that he should be so interested in one who certainly never evinced much good-will towards him; but George is so liberal and self-denying. By the by, I should tell you we had well-nigh accomplished a *ruse*, stolen your pretty *protégée* from her allegiance to Alegria. You must pardon my being an accomplice to a certain degree in the scheme; conscious that my brother would make an admirable *parti*, I lent my thoughts a little to it. Minnie's sanction was in fact tacitly given, and all would have gone well, had we not been invaded by the most singular importation from India. A hippopotamus with a giraffe for its consort would have been less monstrous in their way than the pair of oddities at present

sojourning in Grosvenor Square. To be serious, we have a Mr. Ryland and his daughter with us. The father is connected with Graham in a business way—how I hate the term!—and Graham asked him, out of compliment, to stay with us: he took him literally, to our chagrin. This Mr. Ryland is a puzzle—worldly and unworldly, good-humoured and caustic, a gentleman and a bear—I have seldom seen a man like him. He is singularly attentive to your *protégée;* asks a host of questions about her, and frowns if the replies do not suit him. Graham is fidgety in his society; so is George, which surprises me, for George is, for a man who now pays his debts, the most companionable person I ever knew. As for the daughter, she is called Ada, and is the devil,—pardon the word, it dropped undesignedly from my pen, there is so much *ink* in it. George talks great nonsense about her: he says he has known her a long time, and that she inherits all the fascination of all the woman-tyrants in the world; that he feels his senses illuminated in her presence; but you know how original he is. They have

quarrelled half-a-dozen times already, and frighten your *protégée* dreadfully, or else she is slily jealous, *entre nous*. The silly little creature spends the best part of the day in her room with her door locked. Mr. Ryland is passionately attached to this girl Ada, and is possessed with all sorts of conceits about her. He thinks he has educated her; he begs Minnie to be her friend and try to influence her tastes. But I must tell you, that two more widely sundered beings cannot exist. You had better have Minnie strangled by the order of humanity, than permit an attempt to blend natures so incongruous and opposed. Nature, remember, will be uppermost; and Ada's nature is the devil—dear, dear! in speaking of her, how that not ungentlemanlike, yet rather disagreeable, but not unromantic scapegrace, haunts me. Well, well! a step approaches: so light the footfall, you cannot think! Yes! it is Ada. I will sketch her likeness. She looks the maturity of girlhood, without a bone in her body. If I were to tell you what the wild creature said to me the first hour we met about English women requiring

shampooing! Mr. Ryland says she is only sixteen; Minnie is nearly nineteen, is she not? she looks three years younger than Ada. But Ada—there she stands—she has no idea I am in the room—gazing up straight into the eye of the sun, muttering something in that weird language of hers. I always feel as if some one was strangling me when I hear it. If you saw the attitude! The complexion of the face is olive, dark and glowing, and, under excitement, there is a richness with it, heightened by the brilliancy of the eye, of which you can form no correct idea. Indeed there *is* a strange, weird, beautiful wilfulness about the whole thing. She is off again; she hears George in the Chinese room. I am glad he can amuse her, for when she is thrown upon my society she says such strange things, and with such a voice and accent, that I am more than half afraid of her. If you heard her pronounce 'India,' and talk about omens, she would make all your nerves thrill. She is a thorough child of the sun, and the moon too, I think. One moment her face glows with

the Asiatic blood, as if the passion and senses held uncontrolled sway over heart and intellect; the next, it is quite soft and sensitive, and she manifests a quietude of manner, and a childish trustfulness, that interest one strangely. The girl is clever, and singularly imaginative: though of so wayward a nature, she certainly possesses great natural endowment. Her faculties and reasoning powers would be in advance of her years, were she thirty-two instead of sixteen. When subject to excitement, irritation, or overwrought feelings, all her being seems on fire, and her eyes are quite a study, so large, glowing, and concentrated in expression; both mind and soul seem for the time preternaturally awake, and her language corresponds."

In fine, Mrs. Graham evidently wished to make Miss Weston painfully aware that Ada was a very unfit companion for Minnie. She concluded her letter by saying—

"Mr. Ryland speaks of running out to Madeira, and taking the girls with him. Graham resists; we all resist in reference to Minnie, because

we are not quite sure a course of this kind will meet your approval. But Minnie says neither yes, nor no; I cannot make her out; but I suppose Mr. Ryland will have his way. If he takes Minnie under his charge, and cages her with his marvellous daughter, you will soon have *two* nervous patients upon your hands, provided Minnie survives the voyage."

When Miss Weston had concluded this letter she said to herself:

"Mrs. Graham, you cannot deceive me, nor can you frighten me. You have thrown in this harsh colouring relative to the Indian girl to make me apprehensive of a baleful influence being exercised by her over my own darling. I certainly feel a singular interest in everything connected with the name of Ryland, and I would far sooner poor Minnie should be in Mr. Ryland's society than yours, and much obliged am I to him for his resolve relative to her. False woman! I was very wrong to trust my treasure in your hands. 'Not quite sure I should approve,' indeed!"

Miss Weston took up the other letter and

opened it with a nervous emotion, surmising from whom it came. It was from Mr. Ryland; and there was an enclosure from Minnie. Mr. Ryland's letter must speak for itself; it was as follows:

"Grosvenor Square, Jan. 28, 1847.

"My dear Madam,

"I have reason to believe that the name of Ryland is not unknown to you. Indeed, in a letter I received from Mr. Seaton a short time before his death, he informed me that he had intrusted certain papers to your care directed to me, which were to be examined by us together. Relative to those papers there is much, I conjecture, to engross our sympathies. It is, however, natural that you should say to me, 'Why, knowing this, have you so long delayed opening a communication with me?' My reasons shall be explained when we meet. My silence in as far as you are concerned was mainly owing to this, that your relative, Mr. Graham, replied to some questions I was induced to put to him, after my knowledge of Mr. Seaton's death, in a way which,

at the time, disposed me to believe that the answer I received came from your suggestions, and was prompted by your convictions. I am now aware that this belief was an error—although Mr. Graham speaks with strange reluctance upon this topic. It is singular that I made the acquaintance of Miss Seaton within a few days of my arrival in London. On her account I accepted an invitation to this house, and this house is not a safe home for her. She is too young in heart, too sincerely unselfish and impressible, to associate with individuals of the sort that surround her. The influence this sweet girl exercises over me, astonishes me. Her soft sunny face awakens memories I supposed gone to the grave of the past. I am most anxious to see you; and, as Miss Seaton is not safe here, I intend to take her with me to Madeira. I am in great hopes you will not object to my daughter Ada's being in her society for a time. The influence of Miss Seaton's gentleness will be of inestimable value in calming and regulating the impulse of my untamed child. I shall sail for Madeira by the next packet."

Minnie's letter came next. Poor little Minnie!

"From day to day," she wrote, "I am more and more in need of your guiding voice, mamma. I do not see my way clear at all. The influence of Mrs Graham's conversation on my mind, and the strange manner in which she acts, appear to have affected my character a great deal. I feel less simple, less innocent, less pure. I do not think right with my former confidence: the simple pleasures which afforded me so true a delight are pleasures no more. Never shall I be happy in dear Alegria again. And since my last letter various things of strange import have overtaken me. As I told you, a foreign-looking gentleman had called at this house, and evinced on seeing me singular emotion. He is now living here, and has a daughter called Ada with him, and their name is Ryland. I could never have believed that I should be drawn to a stranger as I am to Mr. Ryland. He is so kind, so watchful of my happiness, that I have grown to feel a confidence in his presence, which is most unaccountable. And Ada, mamma, you cannot think what she is

like. In my mind I sometimes compare her to a beautiful bird, a beautiful foreign bird, or airy gazelle, she is so bright and joyous; and then the next hour, her nature is altogether changed; she is suddenly transformed into a being so terrible, so harsh, so strange, that I tremble to be in her presence; and yet I think more about her in these latter moods than when she is so bright and gay. Mrs. Graham says she is the victim of demoniacal influences: but this is cruel speaking; for I know Ada feels generously, even when the dark fit is over her. Only this morning, I saw her standing in a stupor of sullen anger, in consequence of a remark of her papa's, when the latter in leaving the room stumbled over Mrs. Graham's pet. The dog gave a sharp cry of pain; in an instant, all Ada's anger was gone, her cheek glowed, her eyes swam in tears, she flew to poor Fid and took him in her arms, and those dark strange eyes shone with sympathy. And Fid, mamma, who is not even civil to his own mistress, goes to Ada with confidence and affection. Since Ada has been here I have been left to my own thoughts and feelings,

relative to that serious subject I mentioned in my last letter. Now Sir George Elpingstone is quite devoted to Ada. It causes Mr. Ryland great uneasiness. Mrs. Graham says it is only flirtation, Sir George's way; but Ada is in earnest, I am sure. Sir George has professed a great deal of affection for me; but he could not have been in right earnest, do you think so, mamma, after what I tell you about him and Ada? I scarcely know if I am right in accompanying Mr. Ryland to Madeira, but Mr. Ryland says I must go; and—it is strange—but I am incapable of opposing his lightest wish. You must indeed forgive me, dear mamma, if, under great trial and difficulty, I do not act aright; for you are aware you have guided my steps heretofore, and I was very suddenly left alone. Still, of course, I am very unhappy for you to see that I cannot always do what is right when you are absent. Dear, dear mamma, I feel that school-days are not over yet."

"My dearest," exclaimed Miss Weston, with quivering lip, as she placed her hand upon the letter, "all life is a going to school; education

is not perfected at three score years and ten. Dear Minnie! I am indeed anxious to have you near me; and yet——" here Miss Weston paused, and sat for a time in a fixed—stern mood.

"Edward must know all." Upon this point Miss Weston's mind was made up; and she moved away to Edward's room with the correspondence in her hand.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"LETTERS! have letters arrived?" cried Edward, starting up from a table, at which he had been writing.

"Yes, Edward," Miss Weston answered, with tolerable cheerfulness; and taking Mrs. Graham's letter to him, she added, "Read that first."

Edward did as he was requested. When he observed the glib, unfeeling way in which the writer treated his late illness, he looked much hurt, though he could not refrain from smiling. But when he came to the intelligence affecting Mr. Ryland, his cheeks crimsoned, and then an almost death-like pallor followed. As he read, he could scarcely control his feelings. He would pause and gaze into Miss Weston's face, and then return to the letter.

Miss Weston read Edward's emotion only in part. But she said,

"Read on, Edward; we must hope that this intelligence does not portend the troubles we fear."

He read the letter through, and then the others; rose from his seat, and moved through the room like a man whose mind was incapable of forming a settled opinion or plan; then again sat down and reperused the letters. When he came to Mr. Ryland's reference to papers intrusted by Mr. Seaton to Miss Weston, he said to his companion,

"Papers, papers! you connected with Mr. Ryland! You the repository of a trust affecting him!"

"Yes, Edward; this is one of the few secrets I have apart from you."

"And have you those papers with you?"

"Alas, no! Mr. Ryland's visit will be futile. I took them from my desk and left the packet in Mrs. Graham's charge, the day before my departure."

"Have you any idea of the subject to which those papers refer?"

"I received them, Edward, when I accepted the charge of dear Minnie."

"Are you not satisfied that Minnie was the daughter of Mr. Seaton?"

"I was never satisfied on the point; but do not at present press me further."

Edward said nothing more for some time. It was evident that he was brooding over some agitating thought. At length he could not resist saying, so palpable was the inference from the conversation:

"You suspect there is a blood relation between Minnie and Mr. Ryland?"

"I do; and that is why I once told you, Edward, that Minnie's destiny was not your destiny." Edward again pondered. An expression of anguish on his face changed to seriousness and deep thoughtfulness, and he said musingly,

"The Ryland grave in the strangers' burial-ground here? Alegria here, and adopted by you because Minnie's name was connected with it by

Mrs. Seaton? and Minnie, a pretty corruption of the word Meninha; and Meninha the name used by Mr. Ryland in his instructions to my father about the investment of that money?" When Edward got thus far, he turned once more to Mrs. Graham's letter, and pointing to her allusions to Mr. Ryland's singular behaviour, he said, "In connecting what I know with this, I forget all else."

Miss Weston had been very apprehensive that the hints and allusions to Minnie would affect her nephew more than all besides; but as she saw his thoughts take so unselfish a turn, she said,

"Edward, I must seek your advice. I am very painfully situated. I have written to Mr. Ryland on the subject of his misplaced confidence, but he cannot have received my letter."

"You have written to Mr. Ryland! Shame is then still nearer home than I believed. Another secret! Why could you not have trusted me? Had I known of this, I would have lived or died in Mincing Lane, slaving night and day, and——" but here Edward paused.

"I deserve your reproaches, Edward. Still my position was a delicate one, and so was yours. The connexion between your father and Mr. Ryland happened thus. Mr. Seaton, some years ago, spoke to my father in this way: 'A man,' he said, 'whom I once trusted as myself—mark me, I say *once* trusted,—has written to me requesting me to place him in the hands of some London firm for the purpose of consignment of produce from the Indian market. Will the introduction suit you?' My father, Edward, communicated with your father; and the connexion was embraced by them. From this, the house of Weston and Graham became Mr. Ryland's agent. The firm was then prosperous. It is not so now. Shall Mr. Ryland be the innocent sufferer, now I am in possession of this fact. I decided he should not, if I could help it. I wrote therefore to him, telling him his presence was needed in England to protect his interests. He has not received that letter. Still, as he is coming here, must we act with duplicity in concealing that which he ought to know?"

"Certainly not," Edward said. "When Mr. Ryland arrives, we must prove to him that we are truthful and honourable. There must be no concealment with Mr. Ryland. His money was not invested as he desired; and I have a suspicion that the scheme in which that large amount was ventured has turned out a failure. If so, God help my poor father, for this dreadful panic in the commercial world will deprive him of the power of redressing the wrong he has done. I wish I was by his side. I am sure if I were present, I could do good."

"You, Edward, do good at such a crisis as this! You, so young, so ill-appreciated, so inexperienced, and without authority!" said Miss Weston, sadly.

Edward paced the room as he answered—

"I am young, yet some men at my age had achieved greatness. Shall I despair of doing something of worth, because I cannot rate myself at forty-two instead of twenty-two years of age? Years are not the passport to success in honest achievement of an end. It is the will,

the honest aim, the resolution to stand undaunted by difficulty and trial. I am not altogether inexperienced. My perseverance is known and my character respected in Mincing Lane. Can I do nothing? A feeling within me tells me I can. But for its promptings, I would not have left England in search of health. My mistake was, that I did not expect difficulties to develop themselves so quickly."

Edward mused for awhile, and then continued with grave energy—

"I have seen my faults when I was at home, and I have done my utmost to correct them. For a time I acted on the silly, boyish fancy that business life was devoid of incentive to honour and usefulness. I thought the occupation grovelling and vulgar, and took to it with a wrongly biassed mind and with reluctant feelings. Reflection has shown me that it is the animating principle which exalts or degrades an occupation; that honourable conduct ennobles every calling. I see my duty; I will follow it up at all costs; I will soon stand by my father's

side, and prove to him by zealous acts and practical aid that he has a true friend left to him in the hour of his adversity."

"Why, Edward, I have not known you half!" exclaimed Miss Weston, with emotion. "The Thames will be emptied after all."

"If I do not succeed," cried Edward, with new courage, "it will be a consolation to know that I have trod the right path in my attempt. It is health that I require; and I feel the wind that brings it daily fanning my cheek. Do you not see how much I *am* changed?—and if I continue to improve as I have done this month past, I shall soon have strength to work equal to my will. Then, ho! for London and labour!"

"Brave words! brave words! And where right is, God is there also."

So said Miss Weston, and was called away, some visitors having arrived.

Edward mused long over the grave facts which the letter before him and his conversation with his aunt had partially brought to light. He could not think Minnie fickle, nor unworthy; he gene-

rously remembered how easily she was influenced by people whom she liked, or who were kind to her, and with whom she lived; and likewise, had he not left her "free to act and think as her heart dictated?" He had no authority to judge her. True love is lowly. Deeply did he sympathise in her trouble. The evidence in her letter of such acute unrest of mind partially concealed from his sight the full nature of the half-disclosed mystery relative to her kindred. He felt these facts in cruel force at a later day; but, for the present, he seemed comforted in the idea that he should see her soon. Minnie was coming—that joy overruled the hidden trial; if a cloud appeared, the sunshine from this thought was so bright that he scarcely noticed it. Edward's morning work was ended. He put his papers together, closed his desk, and moved away, leaning over the balcony at the windows of his room. As his eye fell on the tranquil sunny scene before him, he felt his heart grow calm, and his mind rise up in gratitude for the new spirit and life within him; he could

have knelt in worship of the glorious hour; earth, air, sea, and sky were redolent of young spring, with the sheen of summer over all. How much climate has to do with feelings! as much as it has to do with flowers.

At length Edward left his room and joined the company in the garden. A Miss Fennel and Markwell were with his aunt. They were sitting in the miranté, or summer-house; Miss Fennel was discoursing on theology — a very popular topic of conversation in the spring of 1847 in Madeira—and what she thought, or remembered to have heard from a clerical friend, she uttered with the confidence of an oracle—ignorant of objections, fearless of mistakes. Markwell being in a chatty humour, followed Miss Fennel, but on the other side of the question, and the lady finding this out, became indignant. Happily for good will, Edward just then made his appearance, when Miss Fennel shook her finger at Markwell, and addressed herself to Edward. In the presence of an invalid, Miss Fennel's heart beat warm and true. Many a

weary sufferer had partaken of her charity; more than one life had been saved by her good nursing. Her true character appeared wherever her help was needed.

"We have visitors, Mr. Graham. A vessel consigned to papa has several passengers to India on board. We have taken a dozen or so to our house; and amongst them is a sparkling little lady called Rose, and Mildmay is her surname. She delights in fun and naughtiness, and has won me to give a picnic the day after to-morrow. You must escort her. I told her so. She answered saucily that she would bargain for two things—that you must make love to her, and ride well; I guaranteed the latter. Pity she is going to India."

Markwell smiled—"Rose will be a general in three years," he said; "she likes the army, and wishes to try her hand upon you."

"Thank you and the pretty Rose, but I would rather not: I dislike experiments of that sort."

"Still we must have you; and you likewise, Mr. Markwell," said Miss Fennel.

"By all means," replied Markwell; "I like picnics — a picnic is a holiday to the conventionalities of insularity. A queer, independent, speak-your-mind sort of amusement, especially after the champagne."

Miss Fennel shook her finger again at Markwell, made Edward promise he would accompany Rose Mildmay to the picnic, and then went her way to make up her party: and all to please the pretty stranger—a little roguish thing she had known but for a day, and from whom she would part in a few days, most probably for ever.

When Edward and his friend Markwell were left together, the former took the latter into his counsel touching the communications made that day. Markwell was evidently pleased, as we all are at the moment, with being so confidentially trusted by one whom he so thoroughly esteemed. Edward's concluding remark touched him keenly:

"You must help me to see my duty to myself, my friend, for then I may hope to perform it to others."

"I will be your friend, Graham, to the back-

bone," Markwell answered. "Truth is in truth, and Mr. Ryland shall see it. For the rest,

> "'Cease to lament that which you cannot help,
> And study help for that which you lament.'

"Now, Edward Graham, make haste and get ready to accompany me to Fanal. I must have it so: we must talk, think, act, combine, with strong thoughts, for now comes the critical point in your life."

Markwell did not say he feared to trust his friend too much to himself, but he felt it; and so determined was he with his hospitality and good-will, that Edward could not resist him and his hospitable designs, and they left Vigia together for Fanal. It was a great relief to Edward to be taken out of self in the period between the coming and the come—in the time which separates anxiety from the development of its cause. First came a picnic, then a Castle ball, followed by others of a like kind, together with theatricals on board an American man-of-war. Markwell took Edward with him wherever he went. He thoroughly understood his guest's feelings; and when the latter

spoke nervously of the arrival of the expected visitor, he had always a word ready with which to reassure him.

"Cheer up, Graham," he would say; "don't be beat in fortitude by Barnaby Rudge's raven."

He would not permit of an hour's inactivity; he drew Edward out into the glorious sunshine, and bade him be strong. From the way they rambled about amid the ravines and upon the mountain spurs, they seemed to experience physical enjoyment in merely living and moving and nothing more, yet not uninfluenced by higher things. Nature does not permit man to walk unmoved among her mountains and flowery glens, her fields and streams. Her power to astonish, to appal, to cheer, to soothe, appeals in vain only to the dead heart. She, as the child of the great first cause, says to every living thing, "Come and learn." She is God's own, and therefore wisdom blended with beauty is in the secret history of her dwelling.

CHAPTER XXV.

"A PACKET signalled, Graham," was Markwell's greeting, as he put down some books he had brought from the English library.

"Indeed!" cried Edward, on his legs in an instant. "Let us go to town directly; perhaps they are come!"

"Most probably. I will go; not you. If Mr. Ryland is on board, you will soon know it. If not, you will be spared a wetting. See, it still rains."

"Rains! yes: of course, it does: when will it give over? Spit—spit—spit, and nothing else. I hate a day that stands shilly-shallying the whole morning and afternoon, like a country booby unable to make up his mind what to do."

"How thoroughly English! Three days' rain

these three months, and now we see the animal in its proper nature. I shall send you to rate at an English March, if you do not take care."

"You have met people out, I know. I will only go as far as the Commercial rooms," pleaded Edward.

"I have not met a sane individual, believe me: and positively only four or five invalids, headed by the sweet-scented Rose Mildmay, who has prevailed upon her fellow-passengers to protest against sailing until after the races to-morrow."

Edward again looked out at the weather. His friend understood him: he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Remain with me until the morning, and rest quiet if you can. Graham, it is the best counsel I can give you. If they are come, you are best off for to-day where you are."

Upon this Markwell hastened away to Miss Weston, and armed himself with a note of introduction to Mr. Ryland, in the event of his being on board the packet. As had been surmised, the party was there, and after Markwell had accom-

panied the stranger to Vigia, he hastened back to Fanal to communicate the intelligence to his guest. Edward's cheek burned, then paled before the intensity of his emotion—all hope, all life of heart lay in this arrival.

"I wish I had been with you to welcome Mr. Ryland," he said. "I hope he will not attribute my absence to indifference." Edward thought of Minnie as he said this.

"I told him I had acted as your deputy," replied Markwell; "I did not say more, because he did not give me an opportunity."

"I suppose not. No doubt he feels inimically disposed towards me."

"Do not create an impression of this sort, Graham, and take it in trust," said Markwell, kindly. "Mr. Ryland," he added, "appears to me just the man to deal with, where all is fair and straightforward. He has seen the ups and downs of life, and is gifted with a small amount of *savoir faire*."

"Yes; tell me what he is like; and the daughter—I feel a strong interest and curiosity about

her. You have seen the world, Markwell, and can form a shrewd estimate of character. What strikes you as most remarkable in the daughter?"

"The thick silk fringe of her eye-lashes. But there is some one with golden tresses, in whose soft blue eyes beams the spirit of gentleness, so sweet, so spiritual, so sun-touched with loveable graces, called by such a boreable name—in fact, love itself ——"

"I know her," Edward said, interrupting his friend.

"Very well," observed Markwell; "about those you don't know. To tell you the truth, Graham, the tongue, pen, or pencil that can give an expressive likeness of Miss Ryland, deserves to be immortalized. A more promising subject to puzzle critic or greybeard I never encountered, and bear in mind, mine has been rather an extended sphere of observation. But I will be ungallant enough to begin with the sire, and I should say that he was neither a proud nor a conceited man. So we have some nature, you see, of the right sort to commence with; and,

Graham, we must look cheerfully on matters, or i' faith we shall soon discover our necessities in coping with an individual who shows worldly knowledge and experience in eyes, hands, head, and voice. Mr. Ryland is about five feet ten inches in height. I do not think he would exalt himself to six feet on such a standing, like our friend the Russian Count Wangischinhostenchoff, and for a man who has lived in

"'Inger, eating potted ginger,'

less lank than common. Come, Graham, don't be down in the mouth."

"I will do my utmost. Enough of Mr. Ryland. Tell me of the daughter."

"Of the wondrous Ada," cried Markwell, rubbing his brow, "all I can say is, that I have known some rather original and eccentric young ladies in my time, even your little *Rose* is passably wild, but Miss Ryland out-Herod's Herod. The quick blood of generosity evidently flows through her veins, requiring but a spark to set it on fire. This is something akin to

nobility of nature, you will say. I discovered it at the moment of her landing. On the beach a man goaded his oxen as though he enjoyed it, I thought she would have struck him. In a moment the soft olive of her countenance was a flood of fiery light as she said to the man, with flashing eyes: "How will you like that, when you are an ox? You will be well goaded then, if you have what you deserve." That girl will make strong weather of it, I predict. Her face, Graham, is very like that of some gipsy girls I have seen in the north of Spain; a shade darker, with a slight dash of the *mosaic*. Her figure is light, graceful, and singularly pliant; with a *vivacity* imbuing it, if I may so speak, which gives it a kind of flexible elegance irrespective of motion. Her *eyes*—there, Graham, you must see her. I wonder if she ever said the Lord's Prayer; she does not look as if she had. It is a strange idea to enter my head, but if ever a curse of some sort was over a creature of mortal mould it is over her. I could almost hear it in her voice."

Edward Graham could not talk. A sadness, a nervousness, in spite of his resolution to be strong, crept on over his heart and spirits. He felt that a trial was near. He began to mistrust his strength to bear him through it. Minnie in the island; Minnie within half an hour's ride, and he absent from her, signified, as he thought, the commencement of a restraint he would not, a year back, have thought possible. Meditation on new anxieties brought the memory of old days back to him; back the old Alegria days came—a resurrection of the beautiful, to grow pale in the present fears, as flowers that spring from the earth through the treacherous warmth of a mild December.

CHAPTER XXVI.

In the first raptures of the meeting between Minnie and Miss Weston, all was joy, gratitude, and heart emotion.

"Oh! mamma, I am so glad!" had been Minnie's exclamation half-a-dozen times at least. But now, as she used these words again, when they were alone in the private room of the elder lady, tears started into her eyes, and a sigh came from her inmost heart.

"I am truly grateful that I have you with me once more, dearest;" and Miss Weston drew her *protégée* into her lap as if she were still a child; and parting her sunny curls with the pride of affection—a gracious pride it is—she added: "Tears, Minnie! and worse than the

old shade of sadness! Dear me! this will never do!"

Minnie now wept.

"What is it, love? These tears are not from excess of joy. I see a new shadow of unhappiness over the dear face."

"The fit comes on, I cannot help it. I try not to be so silly, but it will come. I feel such an oppression here:" and Minnie placed her hand upon her bosom.

"Are you not happy, Minnie?"

"Yes!—ah, yes! but mamma, I expected you would upbraid me. I do so upbraid myself, for I have acted very weakly. I shall never be happy again." Tears came afresh, and touching indeed was the sad look over the orphan face.

"None of us are exempt from error, Minnie," whispered Miss Weston. "I was to blame in leaving you behind me; but now you are restored to me, we shall get on again as in the old time."

Minnie shook her head.

"What! have you left a little thought behind, Minnie?"

"No, I have not—of the kind you mean," cried Minnie, in a sort of pet. "It was a very bad affair, and I was treated very ill. I always longed for you to act for me as my better angel. But Ada! poor Ada! she has no better angel to warn her." The listener did not tell Minnie that she thought her remarks were rather opaque. She knew what Minnie referred to, and thought it best to change the subject: mention of Ada afforded an opportunity.

"I like Ada, Minnie. I wish she would sit still for me to look at her thoroughly. I am really in doubt about her."

"In doubt, mamma?"

"In doubt, Minnie! There is a spell about her, a fascination, a charm; and I am uncertain whether the influence be good or evil. I cannot get her out of my eyes. What extraordinary ear-rings! Do you love her, Minnie?"

"Yes, dearly, when she is not talking about the stars. When she does so I am frightened.

One moment she looks the spirit of beautiful enthusiasm; another, what scorn and defiance in the full orbs of those imperial eyes! She tosses back her head in triumph or passion, and those dark bands of silky hair escape their bondage and ——." Another pause.

"Have you no question to ask relative to a certain old friend, Minnie? His kind friend, Mr. Markwell,—a man after my own heart, Minnie—was here just now, and amused me with an account of a picnic, and how a certain friend of ours escorted a very charming girl, called by such a pretty name—Rose Mildmay, Minnie!" It was a very extraordinary speech certainly for Miss Weston to make. It *was* Aunt Mary that made it.

Minnie turned pale and then red. The spell of something more than embarrassment was over tongue and face.

"I never dreamt this of Edward." Minnie paused, looked down, and added:

"I deserve it all. I can never look him in the face again. What can he think of me? Yet I

always loved him, I ever have, and must; and he loved me. Do not blame me for speaking thus, mamma; I cannot help it." Aunt Mary kissed Minnie, and rashly remarked:

"I am not surprised you feel so. There is so much in Edward which a fresh, honest heart must admire, that if love had not sprung up between you, it would have been more or less than natural. Edward is to us what no one else in this world can ever be."

"Yes," Minnie said, in a low, thoughtful, hesitating voice; and again there was a pause; for the elder lady was gathering up the reins of her love in haste. At last Minnie summoned nerve enough to inquire what Edward *said* when he read her letter.

"He *said*, Minnie, that he almost expected it. What he *thought*, I cannot say; but you know, darling, it would be very wrong to let Edward see you remembered what happened before then; that is, it would not be——"

"Yes! yes! I see it all, and feel it. He has some one else to love now. Rose—what, mamma?"

The eyes were drooping, and the old look was blended with a new grief.

"Mildmay, Minnie."

"Yes! Rose Mildmay." Minnie more than once repeated the words. Then she moved away for the first time in her life from her kind protector's sheltering arms, and stood still, and alone in the centre of the room.

Miss Weston smiled.

"And you will meet him to-morrow, Minnie, candidly and pleasantly. You will let him see the blue eye bright and the heart untroubled. Edward has much to agitate him, and in trial we must prove true friends."

"Yes—ah, yes!" The speaker's face glowed with unselfish interest in a moment.

"That is a dear, good Minnie; now you are like my Alegria darling." Then Miss Weston placed her hands over her eyes—an old way of hers when she was thinking very much, and Minnie understood it, for she said:

"What does your mind show you, dear mamma?"

"Two loved ones, darling, loved alike, and with an all-hoping love. The two which made beauty out of the cloud, as out of the sunshine, of Alegria." Minnie's heart was strangely touched.

"My own dear mamma, may I come back?" was all Minnie could say, when she was again encircled by those protecting arms. It really does seem that mamma Weston was almost overridden by Aunt Mary; still, as Edward was in trouble, we can conceive an apology possible for this selfishness of kindred affection.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In the morning, nature had resumed her pleasant, smiling face. There is something in the early morning in Madeira which re-animates the body and exalts the spirits. The air is so fresh, the earth so radiant with happy life, that the actual feeling of enjoyment surpasses conception. May the sweet, soft, peaceful soul of a Madeira morning be eternal! may it soothe and strengthen thousands, as it has soothed and strengthened me! The mode of life is in harmony with nature. There are no mechanical cares of practical Europe to vex and agitate an invalid. There is a patriarchal repose—a smoothness and fascination in the primitive customs of the people, a real physical liberty of action,—which affects a mind

not wholly world-ridden with a powerful sympathy.

Edward Graham had risen early. In a ramble round the grounds attached to Markwell's quinta, he had reasoned with himself with the fresh thoughts of morning, and done his best to support his resolution to be strong. At breakfast Edward signified his intention to return to Vigia as soon as the meal was over. Markwell rang the bell; his man entered at the summons.

"Tell José to saddle Harkaway," was the order. Harkaway was Markwell's favourite English horse. Before Harkaway had made his appearance, there was a ring at the garden gate, and a trampling of horses' feet on the paved road, which intimated an arrival. Markwell took a survey of the private way to the quinta, and then announced the presence of Mr. Ryland and party; saying, as he drew Edward forth to assist him in doing the honours of Fanal—

"And really Mr. Ryland sits his horse as if he felt proud of the curiosities which accompany him; but to all appearance quite unconscious of the

heavy contribution he is levying upon the curiosity of the Madeira public."

How Edward's face shone as he met the visitors! Joy and diffidence, pleasure and anxiety—all were there. The others may have seen them; Minnie felt them. She was not looking well, nor, as she had promised, candid and pleasant. An anxious, thoughtful, half-frightened expression flitted over her countenance, mingled with something inquiring, when Edward's hand rested in hers. There was, however, just a glance of old sunshine for him; and "Dear Edward" fell from her lips. Edward heard, and was in good heart in a moment.

In Mr. Ryland, Edward saw the man he expected from Markwell's brief sketch: a good-looking person of forty-seven or so, of an agreeable deportment. Mr. Ryland's eye ran with careless scrutiny over Edward's face and figure, and observed, as he offered his hand:

"I am agreeably surprised, Mr. Graham; I expected to find you a great invalid."

"He is wonderfully improved, is he not?" said Minnie, quickly.

"My dear Miss Seaton, this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Graham." An expression of inquiry blended with the kind glance he bent upon her.

"I am aware," said Minnie, blushing; "but I thought you could see that he must be improved."

Mr. Ryland looked just then as if he had drawn an inference.

Edward spoke a few words to Mr. Ryland with graceful embarrassment, and then he stepped with extended hand towards Ada, who stood wilful and imperious. Ada took the proffered hand with reluctance. Edward's face flushed, and he was about to turn away. She looked quickly at him, and said, in a strange tone—

"We shall never be friends."

"I hope we shall—sincerely hope so," answered Edward, looking well at her from under his slightly quivering brow.

"You are in a temper already; they told me of that: and said you had a white leather face, but they were wrong: you have a brown one."

Edward laughed his old laugh.

"Don't you like brown faces?" he asked.

"No; because I hate myself. But I like your laugh and your spirit. Take that."

An expression of great softness stole over Ada's face as she held out a sprig of heliotrope with which she had been toying. Markwell was studying Ada; she saw it, and said, with a frown:

"I would not give him a flower except I had poisoned it. He thinks I cannot read faces; but he mistakes. I know him already; and bad as his countrymen are, he is not the best specimen of them. You may laugh. You think you are not proud because you do a courtesy to people you do not care for. Now if I were a beggar girl, cold, and ragged, and hungry, would you be so liberal of your services as on wet yesterday?" and Ada shook her finger at Markwell. A wonderful way she had of shaking that long taper finger; it appeared to have words, as well as motion. She had caught the tone of her father's conceit, and she looked into the face of the person she addressed, just as her father did; only that with

her, the eye sank directly she had done speaking; and the effect was—when that long, silky fringe fell over those dark blue eyes—much as if a star on which one had been gazing had suddenly disappeared.

Markwell held his own with gay humour.

"If you were hungry," he said, "I would give you Portuguese bread, and show you how to eat without dirtying your fingers; and if thirsty, some fine old Sercial,—a wine, I assure you, which would put life into a dead mermaid."

"A dead mermaid! you unpleasant person; and Portuguese bread! I have seen it; and I suppose, as in India, they wrap it up, when it is made, in anything that happens to be at hand."

Markwell suggested turbans.

"Turbans! you may laugh; but they are a much more sensible head-gear than your absurd hat. An Englishman's brains must be very hard to bear such a covering."

"And an Indian's soft, according to your

idea. But I withdraw the impeachment, for your sake."

"Come, Ada, be yourself," Mr. Ryland said, interfering, as he always did when he saw her temper giving way. "You are not so Indian in heart as you wish to appear. You must be good, and believe our friends to be just what they seem."

"I do not like good people," replied Ada, with a very bewitching wilfulness, "they are such hypocrites! and your Indian child is almost contaminated. There was that Mrs. Slivery—what a name!—she was as intimate with Providence as with her eye-glass. Do not ask me to be good, papa; if I was to try ever so hard, it would be no use; I should only get worse."

She opened a book at hand as she spoke. It was a scrap-book, sprinkled with caricatures. "See," Ada cried, "more hypocrisy! Here are Mr. Markwell's friends made ridiculous—I could not do that, at all events." Then she beckoned Minnie to the garden, with "Come away, little thing," and an air that intimated rightful superiority.

Markwell followed to show his visitors the curious strelitzia, and other choice plants in bloom in the open air. When Mr. Ryland was left alone with Edward, he said, in an observant way—

"I am commissioned with remembrances from friends in Grosvenor Square, Mr. Graham."

"I hope my father and stepmother are well?" Edward said.

"Your father is well; your stepmother—really for so fashionable a lady, her health and spirits were exceedingly good."

Edward's lip slightly curled. He did not court further remark by answering.

"But really, Mr. Graham," Mr. Ryland said, "you must excuse my alluding so directly to you. They led me to suppose you were so great an invalid that I am quite at a loss to understand this metamorphosis."

"I hope to pass muster some day. I owe much to this wondrous climate; but you know it. This is not your first visit to the island, I believe."

Mr. Ryland looked keenly at his companion, and his brow contracted. There was a short silence, when Mr. Ryland adopted the Scotch method of answering a question.

"You purpose making this a permanent residence, do you not?"

"Far from it. I am anxious beyond measure to return to England. I have much to attempt," Edward said, with emphasis, "before I resign myself to enjoyment."

"Indeed," said Mr. Ryland, looking keenly at Edward. "I would say, Beware! In new attempts we are like children—more ready to trip, the more anxious to walk."

"I am teaching my feet to think," was Edward's answer.

"Your feet to think!" repeated Mr. Ryland, as if to himself: "an excellent rule, Mr. Graham."

Then after a pause:

"I am happy in having made the acquaintance of your relative at Vigia. Miss Weston appears a lady of genuine worth and kindliness of heart.

As she entered the breakfast-room this morning, a sense of brightness and cheerfulness seemed to come with her."

"Were all like her, earth would be a paradise," said Edward, as he went to prepare himself to accompany the party to Vigia. Mr. Ryland's glance followed Edward's retreating figure.

"Hem! I did the young man wrong. Didn't well get over it, until I came to the aunt. Hot temper, but under command. So, Sir George Elpingstone, this is the veritable Edward Graham, eh? There is more in this than meets the eye. You did well to advise me, Miss Weston, to see this young man before I formed an opinion concerning him; but I see something besides which verifies what the old Squire at Eling—fine old fellow—chuckled over, but to this I never *will* consent. Bah! the idea of the thing almost maddens me." Mr. Ryland flung open a window and gazed towards the mountains.

"Yes, there it rests," said he. "I see the huge pine above its fellows — your favourite rambling-ground, my Lucy. Alegria! Alegria!

our child's birth-place — sweet thought once; but now the memory of your pure hopes, my lost Lucy, comes down over my soul like a cloud. I must search out your lonely resting-place, my poor Lucy. Oh! conscience, conscience! there is no tribunal so stern as thou! assuming with age by little and little thine own supreme authority."

Mr. Ryland was interrupted in his self-communing by a voice at his elbow, saying,

"I like him, papa! His smile is music."

"He is the son of a man who has done me foul wrong, Ada. Control your feelings: the human countenance is often deceptive."

"Yes; but not the smile."

"Hold your enthusiasm in hand. There is a cloud between your father and him who claims this young man's duty."

"But the cloud is not all dark, father, like the cloud which rests upon my destiny. It looks lighter now; and it will have many colours, and then grow faint, and all will be brightness. I will ask the stars to give you

this friend to be your comforter when Ada dies."

Mr. Ryland kissed the upturned, earnest face, and was about to reply to this strange speech, when Minnie and Markwell entered the room. In an instant Ada's mood changed; she drew herself up, saying, as she again shook her finger!

"There is my evil genius. *Little thing*" (to Minnie), "do you not feel his presence bite you?"

"You must think better of me; I have not the least bite in my disposition."

"You have; I feel it in your voice. When you think well of me, I will try to think well of you, and not before."

"Really, I think so very eloquently of you."

"You don't," interrupted Ada. "Compliments are falsehoods when people use them to conceal their real feelings. You pity me, and you laugh at me in the same thought. In India, you must know, we read all the feelings in the face; and your face tells me what I say of you; and you upset my temper."

Markwell felt a little uneasy from being partly

conscious of the truth of the charge; but Edward's return created a diversion in his favour.

Mr. Ryland now spoke of returning to Vigia. Ada said something to her father, who addressed Markwell.

"Perhaps Mr. Markwell could recommend a pleasant ride."

Markwell thought of the races. "The ride to the race-ground from the Fanal is picturesque," he said, "and the scene itself odd and laughable. If you will go, I will accompany you."

Mr. Ryland thought it would be a pity to lose seeing anything odd and laughable, so forth they went to mount their steeds.

"You shall ride Harkaway," whispered Markwell to his friend. "Not a word, I will have it so. Ryland can't resist you on the old horse. On him you are invincible." Edward was pleased to have it so; Harkaway and he were close allies.

Mr. Ryland and his party are seated on their hacks, looking round for their escort; the

burequerhos are calling in sportive humour for "José," "Senhor Jose;" Edward and Markwell are looking stablewards, when the door is thrust open, and out comes Harkaway in a most tempestuous mood, bounding and kicking with fun, flies, and condition, such as would induce a man who was not up to this sort of thing, to say, "Thank you, Mr. Harkaway, I would rather not." But Edward was not one of these. He gently gathers up the reins, gives the old horse his head to have another vigorous snort out, and then with a "Steady, boy! steady," he drops into the saddle like a lark upon the heather. A bound of a dozen feet, twice, thrice repeated, and Edward is alongside of Minnie. Does Minnie look timid? Not she; but proud rather; yes, positively like a little heroine. She cannot resist saying,

"How pleased your friend Mr. Templer would be to see you, Edward!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"He has ridden much," observed Ada, to her father, as Edward quietly controlled his high-couraged and rather fractious steed.

"Every one rides here," Mr. Ryland replied, scanning Harkaway, however, with a critical eye.

"I saw some people *sitting* on their horses this morning," Ada said. "It was pitiable. How would such people feel if their horses skimmed the ground like a bird on the wing?"

"On the ground," Markwell said. He proposed a ride round Saint Antonio, on their way to the race-course.

"And is there a chance of a gallop?" Ada cried, springing up into the saddle, with the graceful ease of a perfect horsewoman, and

rousing her steed with a click of the whip, most artistically musical.

"Oh, for my little Arab! what can I do with such a mulish production as this?"

"It is a lively little animal," observed Mr. Ryland.

"So is a camel in comparison of an elephant," exclaimed Ada.

"Shall I shift your saddle to my horse?" asked Markwell.

"There, now you are better. You are better in the saddle than in the garden. First tell me, before I will like you, that you do not think me a devil—beast with a human face, I mean."

"You must not speak thus," Markwell said; and he appeared hurt.

Ada saw it. She extended her hand to him. Her glance at him was full of gentleness; then her eye fell. She seemed to forget the proposal of exchange of horses, and the subject was dropped. Now the party had fairly got away from Fanal, Minnie's horse, as if from an intuitive kind

of perception, ambled on very pleasantly by the side of Harkaway; and both riders appeared satisfied with this position of affairs; but Mr. Ryland looked otherwise. Ada was watching them and him, and she rode up to Minnie's side.

"Come, *little thing*," she said, tapping Minnie's bridle-hand with her whip, "he is my property this morning, and you take your cherub face to gladden papa. He is looking moody and jealous. Do you know what jealousy means, or shall I teach you?"

Markwell thought Ada was well disposed to give Minnie a practical lesson, as she placed herself by Edward's side. Minnie's face was certainly very cherub-like at the moment. She did as she was desired with quite a frightened move, as if she had just arrived at a knowledge of the fact that she had been guilty of something very strange, and ought to have thought of it before. She tried very much not to blush, and her face became all over of a vermilion glow.

The path for the equestrians round St. Antonio wound through a picturesque valley of vineyard,

and then over a rugged, wild ravine. The party was told that sometimes, after heavy rains, the mountain torrents poured through this ravine with great fury. This could be imagined from the unevenness of the track to the main road, scarcely, indeed, to be called a track, for huge masses of rock overlie one another, and afford anything but an agreeable or an easy passage. However, there is no serious difficulty in the way of a steady, practised horse, if the inexperienced will allow the attendant burequerho to take the animal by the head. To this plan, at Markwell's suggestion, Minnie at once assented, looking grateful for the advice; but when Ada's follower approached her, she shot from him like an arrow from the bow, and actually leapt her nag over several large round blocks standing two feet or more from the ground. The poor burequerho—his class is never remarkable for physical courage, although their powers of physical endurance are marvellous —yelled, and cried, and tore his hair, shouting in his own tongue, "The lady is surely mad;" and when he saw Ada perched with elated gesture

on an enormous block, and then disappear on the other side, he gnashed his teeth, and, turning to his companions, said with amusing earnestness—

"O Jesus! she is killed; and it serves her right—my horse! my poor horse!"

"Ada, pray, do not alarm the poor man thus," pleaded Minnie, when she reached the side of the daring girl.

"The only ray of happiness I have known this fortnight."

"Ada!" exclaimed Minnie.

"If I could ride off yonder mountain, I would do so. To feel the will to dare it, is worth all life."

Ada looked as if the words had been scarcely strong enough for her feeling. The flashing eye, the dark flowing hair, the form slightly raised in the saddle in an attitude of energy, the uplifted hand, as she pointed to the peak to which she had alluded, gave almost an air of inspiration to her words. The racecourse was reached: it was a sort of drive, of an egg shape, at the foot of an egg-shaped mountain. The ground gives one

a tolerable idea of undulating motion, and is peculiarly adapted to cause uninitiated horses and riders to execute involuntary gymnastics of singular eccentricity for the diversion of beholders. On the most convenient bit of ground stands the winning-post. Near it is a bench, and on it stands the judge of the course. Sometimes, as in the present instance, when the heat is considerable, a leafy stand is erected over the bench, similar to Punch and Judy's migratory habitation, and the judge pronounces his oracular sentence out of this leafy cave.

Invalid strangers with lanky legs, poor fellows! riding on diminutive island ponies, are come to see the sport. They mingle among the unwashed crowd with a persevering disregard of their olfactory nerves, and smile with very benignant disdain, *à l'Anglais*, on the whole affair. Portuguese gentlemen-jockeys rush about in unsettled dress, with excited minds and beards, clearing the course; flinging the multitude about from side to side with ostentatious exertion, not forgetting to kick and whip the juvenile natives

and lean fly-bitten dogs meandering in their way. Now small boys with small attire are violently equipped by their masters in gay shirts, and hurried upon their steeds, regardless of minor points of dress, such as stockings, breeches, shoes, &c. The effect of pantaloons which could not have seen *worse* days, under a floating pink shirt, is very well, very inartificial. Before each race a bell of a dinner-peal sort warns intruders to retire; and an equestrian, in a curious-cut coat and very odd top-boots, with the judge's hunting-whip, rides up and down before the winning-post, with the hope, if expression says anything, of castigating some urchin or unsuspicious cur excited by the general *furor* and forgetful of the Rubicon marked and tabooed by the high powers. Again the bell sounds for a considerable time, and then four ponies of rusty hue are brought to the post, whipped well on their way by their masters to make them think about it. Then they are off, making an ambling gallop of it through arm, whip, and spur motion, until they come to a steep descent. The favourite,—for each

racer, as in more aristocratic courses, has his backers,—bolts over a low wall and stands still, his rider on his back, amongst the loose stones, twisting like an uncomfortable eel. Another gets his feet in a trench and rolls over. So the race appears to be left to two. Blue-jacket has the lead: half-a-mile from home, he thinks it grand, and whips away accordingly. The excitement at the grand stand *is intense.* Yellow-jacket having got down the hill, gains courage. He works away with almost superhuman energy, gains upon the rival blue, collars his tail, then the girths, then neck and head, and comes first into the open stretch of the course, leading in a straight line to the grand stand. "Bravo, yellow!" is the shout; but yellow is out-worn; he comes up jadedly, thinking, however, it is all right, and looking victorious, nods to his friends, who rush towards him, when, lo! within only a couple of lengths of the winning-post red-jacket —the one who fell at the trench—rushes with a staggering velocity into yellow-jacket's stern, and they make common cause in the dust, close

to the coveted goal. A band strikes up a remnant of some air, which eventually settles into "God save the Queen!" ladies wave handkerchiefs; friends bear off the dusky, dusty jockeys, and sportsmen debate how to settle the differences between them upon the *original* result.

Mr. Ryland and his party entered the race-course during this set-to between yellow-jacket and red. They were too much amused to notice the attention they attracted.

Rose Mildmay was present, flatteringly attended. Still she made her way to Edward, and, looking curiously at Ada and Minnie, challenged him to race her once round the course.

Edward laughed: "Must Harkaway go backward?" he asked.

Rose looked pettish.

"A canter, then. To-morrow that dreadful captain says he will sail."

Could Edward refuse?—of course not. Away they went. It was a very quiet canter; Rose feared her horse would bolt, so they made up the pace by talking. Minnie's face wore a very

serious air; but up came Edward, introduced Rose, and hied away to Markwell's call. The latter had been importuned to run Harkaway against an American mare of reputed speed, belonging to a gentleman who took a pride in the course, and who wished to show his friends and countrymen a good race. What could Markwell do but assent?—which he did with grace. Then who was to ride Harkaway? Markwell's twelve stone was too much, if a lighter weight could be found. Several men looked at the old horse, as if they had never seen him before, and declined; for certainly Harkaway was not the pleasantest horse in the world to steer round the Madeira course. Edward sat quietly in the saddle and did not speak; he knew he was the weight, and the old spirit of sport thrilled him like an electric shock, causing his brow to quiver and his heart to throb; but he did not like to offer himself when others had refused. An Englishman, with an Italian face, sporting rig, and extensive talking knowledge of racing—to believe him, he was a veritable Nimrod in the old country,

was asked to ride. He tried to look indifferent, then yielding; but at last, as Harkaway gave a merry hop—a fly was on his flank—he shook his head and said, with a *white* laugh—

"I have a wife and five children at home."

"Philanthropic cowardice!" dropped involuntarily from Edward's lips.

Mr. Ryland heard: he looked keenly at Edward, then said—

"Are you afraid, Mr. Graham?"

Edward gave a *red* laugh, not a *white* one.

"Harkaway is ready for the start without more ado," Mr. Ryland said to Markwell.

"Can you hold him, Graham?" Edward nodded.

"Then we are ready," cried Markwell, exultingly. "Twice round, and I will back the old horse in two to one."

The word was given, and away they went, and Harkaway beat the American with ease. It was said amongst the Portuguese, that the Senhor Graham had ridden with great nerve and coolness. Ada looked on, and watched Edward

keenly. Her colour went and came as she muttered some strange words. She took no heed of Rose Mildmay's pretty chat with Minnie.

Minnie had been very anxious about this race. She feared the exertion would hurt Edward, not that he would fall, there was no fear of that; but it was so warm, and the horse pulled so hard, that she thought Edward would suffer. Rose listened. She was herself a little nervous. When she heard the Christian name pronounced so familiarly, so softly, as though the tongue was used to it, and the lips in love with every letter, she looked quickly into Minnie's face—looked quite steadily into it for a minute, then became wondrous grave and thoughtful; and as Edward came towards them, now the race was over, she took Minnie's hand and said—

"God bless you! Years hence I pray we may meet again."

Rose was gone; nor did Edward catch a glimpse of her on his way to the city. Minnie did not tell Edward how his pretty friend had behaved, but she said Rose Mildmay was

a dear sweet girl, whenever he spoke about her.

On reaching the gate at Vigia, Markwell said "good-morning" to the party, then beckoned Edward to his side.

"Take care of Ada Ryland, Graham," he said, with warning impressiveness.

"Take care of her!" said Edward.

His friend rejoined—

"Well, then, take care of yourself;" and he shook his head. "I am experienced in these matters, Graham, and I fear for you."

"Sagacious friend! your warning instances the sublime of worldly wisdom:—

'But for these vile guns, I would myself have been a soldier.'

Eh, Markwell?" was Edward's response.

"Ryland," Markwell went on, "is acute—very. The impression, however, is favourable. He tells me he goes to Alegria to-morrow, and he has been asking me some questions about the burial-ground."

"I *saw* him speak of me as we left the race-course. What was it?"

"You have a quick eye, Graham. Let me think. Oh! yes, he said to Miss Ryland, 'The riding accounts for the old Squire's affection for Mr. Graham.'"

"Mr. Templer and I take off our hats to so flattering a compliment."

"There again, Graham; your pride all up! Take my advice: be moderate, be temperate, be conciliatory. Thus you may weaken the hands of even an enemy, which Mr. Ryland is not!" and Markwell cantered away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Edward Graham was the first astir at Vigia on the morning following his return to the quinta. He had passed an anxious, almost sleepless, night. No wonder; for his nervous, excitable temperament had been severely taxed. He was haunted all night long, even when he slept, by passing visions of sweet faces, and sounds of sweet voices; but all resolving into one face, into one voice. He had heard each hour of the clock; then as the dawn broke, he heard the birds twitter and the cock crow. Once dressed, few loiter within doors in Madeira, however early the hour, and Edward soon found his way to the garden. Beneath him, at his feet as it were—for the principal suburbs overlook Funchal,—lay the city in repose, white

and spectral, like a city which had arisen from its grave. Edward experienced a strange thrill at the sight of Funchal at this hour. A feeling, first of awe, and then of mysterious sympathy, crept over him. At this still hour, he thought of his friend Perfect, of his interest in his well-doing, of his admirable counsel. Instinctively he gazed in the direction of the strangers' burial-ground, and tracing out the flowing cedars that mark the sacred spot, he sat with his eyes fixed upon it, and although disencumbered of the veil of partial repose which had covered him in the night, his senses appeared to resign themselves to an influence, if not as variable as a dream, at least as difficult to dispel. There he sat; no sound to break the stillness; no living object between him and the white walls of sleeping Funchal.

The east and west suburbs of the city are softly irradiated by the beams of the rising sun; the city itself, solemn in its quietude, is yet covered by the gray hue of early dawn. There, in that white sepulchral town, as if in rehearsal of the stillness of the grave, Sleep

holdeth the inverted torch over prostrate forms, which ere long must bow down before the Throne of Him who owneth no peer. To some, life is flowing, freshly and silently, from out the eternal sea,—filling up the ever-recurring voids in this world-scene: and ebbing quietly away from others, —who shall awake to the visible world around them to find that they are much nearer to the one which is unseen. The white city holdeth all in her embrace,—the votaries of ambition, of sin, of love and sorrow, and the victims whom Death claims for his own. Many shall return to sorrow and joy, and to prolonged struggle in the land of their birth; others shall go down to the dark vaults, where the gray light of the morning, which now enwraps the city in a veil of brightness, penetrates not, and awakes no more the too weary sleepers. For these may such parting be to the land of eternal rest!

"I am glad to find one who sympathizes with my habit of rising early,—an Indian custom which I found perplexing to the inmates at Grosvenor Square. Here it seems I may indulge it with-

out annoyance to myself or others." So said Mr. Ryland, as he stood by Edward's side. The latter, who had been seated under a beautiful plane-tree, rose, and replied:

"There is scarcely a spot on earth, I should think, where that habit can produce more personal gratification. Is it not a glorious morning?"

"It is! Let us take a walk; I suppose you can lead me? I like a stroll before breakfast."

Edward stepped to the quinta, brought forth a couple of light poles used in the island on a mountain scramble, and led the way to a levada above Vigia. There he turned his face to the eastward. It was one of those bright, lovely mornings which make us feel, when we *are* up and out of doors, how absolutely wrong it would have been to have remained in bed. The sunny steeps of the mountains were in their glory. Wherever the eye rested above or beneath the pedestrian's track, all was bright, tranquil, and happy. Sorrow, sin, suffering were facts which

seemed inconsistent with such a world. The air was balmy, cool, and healthful, and therefore most invigorating. Mr. Ryland was evidently sensible of the charm, physically at least, for he stepped along, light and buoyant, and occasionally sprang from rock to rock with an almost youthful freedom of gait. There was little or nothing said, but it was an expressive, not a dull silence. At first Edward Graham felt a little nervous in finding himself thus unexpectedly with his companion; for conscious of the weight of an unexplained relation, he naturally attributed an undefined embarrassment to Mr. Ryland's thoughts also, and for the first half-hour wondered if Mr. Ryland meant to come to an explanation that morning. But it seemed that Mr. Ryland had no such thoughts, for from his manner he appeared disposed to regard Edward in the light of a common acquaintance, with whom chance had brought him into contact for a time —nothing more. Having rambled on for an hour or so, Mr. Ryland proposed that they should halt, and sitting down on a rock said:—

"I half feel disposed to take up a residence here. I want quiet; mine has been a busy life, Mr. Graham. I have passed through many scenes of toil, and tumult, and trial. Might I not find rest here, think you?"

"Rest, even my experience tells me, belongs to no particular spot. We take it with us, or we do not find it."

"You speak, Mr. Graham, pardon me, like a young man who has known little of the excitements and temptations of life. For me I think I should be content with a left-handed sort of happiness, if I could find it."

"Well, you may find that as readily in Madeira as elsewhere," was Edward's answer.

"You think so; are you not a little prejudiced?"

"True. For my part, I rather like prejudiced men."

"I might be prejudiced as to an opinion I had any peculiar advantage in holding. We all are, in such cases."

"So am I. Prejudice favours individuality.

Without it the sameness would be so disagreeable that humanity would lose half its hold upon our affections."

"That is strong. You think deeply, it seems. What think you of Sir George Elpingstone?"

This question, giving such a sudden turn to the conversation, took Edward by surprise; but even on reflection he was seldom worldly-wise enough to conceal his thoughts. He answered—

"My prejudice may leak out again in saying that his influence would have been dangerous to my self-respect, had I not struggled against that influence with a strong effort."

"Thank you, Mr. Graham. I admire candour, although I might not practise it. Once upon a time I was enthusiastic; now I am a bigoted, narrow-souled man of the world. Suppose we return," suggested Mr. Ryland, after a short pause. "Miss Weston, is no doubt, ready for breakfast."

Not a word passed on the road back to Vigia. It seemed all very strange to Edward;—the morning meeting, and the walk and talk with this self-

possessed individual, who had so much at stake, and was yet so calm. Was Mr. Ryland real, or was he acting? If real, he was odd; if acting, he acted very naturally: this was the meagre opinion to which Edward arrived. They were met in the garden by Miss Weston and the girls. Ada was making up the most delicious little bouquets, and gave one to each of the gentlemen. Aunt Mary's heart shone out in her warm greetings. Hoping ever for the best, she believed she saw good augury in this early companionship. When the breakfast was over, Mr. Ryland went alone to the city, and did not return until late in the day. Edward observed a change in his manner towards him. He looked at him with a quiet scrutiny; was serious, not grave; and talked less than at the morning meal. Ada described a display of camelia japonicas she had seen at a quinta called the "Val."

"You do not appear to share in Ada's enthusiasm," said Mr. Ryland to Minnie.

Minnie answered,—

"The colour is very clear, and the flower is

formed with singular regularity of leaf, almost to tameness; but I miss that softness of tint and hue peculiar to our rarely perfumed English roses."

"Your remark implies that you connect softness of tint and hue with perfume—is it not so?"

Minnie said "yes;" and Mr. Ryland replied, "I will remember that."

In the course of the evening, Markwell came according to promise. In a private chat, he told Edward that Mr. Ryland had been to Alegria; that he had also called upon him at Fanal on his way to town, and asked him to obtain admission for him to the strangers' burial-ground.

"Then he has been there. I thought as much, from the fixed, marked way he has looked at me since his return to Vigia."

"Yes: he has been there."

"And did he remark upon what I presumed to do?"

"He did. I accompanied him to act as interpreter between him and the man in charge. I

was requested to ask the name of the individual who had taken such pains to restore *the grave* and to place that beautiful tablet on the wall, telling the resting-place of Lucy Ryland. The man said, 'The senhor that lived at Vigia had done it.' Mr. Ryland caught the sense of the reply, and asked me, bluntly, if I was in Mr. Graham's confidence in this matter. I replied, I was. 'When did Mr. Graham effect this renovation?' 'Shortly after his arrival in the island,' was my reply. 'Not since he heard I was coming to the island?' I was silent: but for the place where we stood, I should have dropped something, I fear, that would have made our acquaintance brief. 'You do not reply,' he said, sharply. 'No, sir, whilst your language implies a suspicion of the correctness of a prior assertion.' He looked hard at me; apologised with emotion; pulled himself up; dashed a tear from his cheek; muttered something about poetic extravagance; came back, linked his arm in mine, and said, with gloomy sadness:

"It is a painful circumstance to be placed under

so deep an obligation to one with whom a stern necessity forces me *ever* to be a stranger."

"*Ever!*" echoed Edward, and he felt his nerve gone once more; an iron, leaden weight oppressed him. Then as Markwell's words of encouragement fell upon his ear, he cried, resolutely:

"This very night I will have an explanation with him. This sort of life will kill me;" and Edward abruptly left Markwell to find his aunt, and ask her to prepare herself for the interview. Miss Weston advocated a little delay. "He is maturing his plans," she said; "he did not come out here to pry in secret; nor is he a man to do so. We must speak, if he does not; but not to-night. Give him no cause of mistrust. His conduct is mysterious. I thought he would speak openly yesterday, or to-day at least. Still a few days will end our suspense. Be careful, Edward: be prudent," concluded the earnest-hearted lady, "or who knows Mr. Ryland may not leave us at a moment's warning, and leave us, Edward, *as we have never been left before?*" This

was an alarming hint to Edward. It implied that Minnie might be taken away—all lost in an hour!

"Has anything transpired to lead you to suppose he considers Minnie nearer to him than we imagined?"

"No. But I judge from his manner to her what his feelings are. In a few days we *will* know more; let this assurance satisfy you." Miss Weston spoke with restraint: she was herself greatly perplexed.

When Edward joined the party, Mr. Ryland was reading a note, which had just been given to him—

"An invitation," he said, "from Mr. Trevor to his place at Camacha, to-morrow. In the way of allurement, he mentions a cricket-match to come off there."

"If you ride over, you will pass a pleasant day, I assure you," observed Markwell.

"No doubt. But what does it mean?—a cricket-match amongst a lot of invalids—consumptive invalids? Pray, enlighten my ignorance. This is

even a greater eccentricity than the racing, Mr. Graham."

"Oh! Edward!" commenced Miss Weston; but Markwell cut short the lecture by saying:

"I assure you an acclimated invalid is like the crazed spokes of a cart-wheel; he has as many lives as a cat, or a king; and the latter, you know, according to a Spanish proverb, never dies. The origin of the cricket-match is this. A screw steamer is in the roads disabled. She is bound for Australia, and her principal passengers are Irishmen. At first they liked the novelty of coming ashore, but as the screw is looser than ever, matters are getting serious, and they are beginning to grow more plain than polite in their language. The *skipper* being between the horns of a dilemma, *hopped* with a lucky *chirp* into the idea of a *cricket*-match. Some good-natured people came to the *skipper's* aid. The Irishmen have been quiet for a week, in anticipation—ready to play the English, as their spokesman O'Rourke, the seventh son of a Galway squire, asserts, with the greatest pleasure in life, and if

they were beaten at the cricket, they would be sure and make a tie of it at the lunch."

"We must go," cried Ada, who had listened to Markwell impatiently. "I have been here two full days and am losing my patience. There is nothing to interest one. Flowers—flowers—flowers!—Sun,—sun—sun! Oh! for a tornado, or thunder, or something large, and black, and grand!"

"There are pleasant walks," suggested Markwell; "a charming variety of scene. A hammock or bullock-drag would——"

"All very fit for you people, no doubt; but not the least for me," answered Ada, indifferently, as she rose from her seat and walked to the window, her slight graceful figure undulating with restlessness. "Pleasant walks!" she said, coming back; "I cannot conceive how a walk can be pleasant to anything less sure-footed than a goat, a monkey, or a mule. There is where some water runs—you call it a levada, I think—I am sick of it. When you think yourself most secure, you are likely to tumble headlong into prickly pear, or

something else equally disagreeable. Besides even that is a city, with all the unclean people's clothes about; loud, noisy, ugly women, washing, bawling, brawling, banging away the clothes on great stones, looking saucy the while—and this is your idea of charming variety of scene! Take me," cried the strange girl, with kindling eye, "upon a night like this, up high into the mountain cliffs, into the fringed edges of the clouds, and whilst——" Ada suddenly stopped—she saw a smile upon Markwell's face, and mistook it (it was of admiration, not of satire), and walked away in anger. A little hand caught hers in passing. Ada was better in a moment. She put her arm lightly round Minnie's neck and said:

"Thank you, Minnie; *he* is not worth——. But for our Portuguese admirer, what should we do?"

"Dear Ada, what do you mean?" Minnie asked, looking very uncomfortable, as she encountered Edward's fixed look.

"How strange you English girls are, Minnie! as if any girl should be ashamed of a lover. There is no nature in you. What do I mean?—

why, our graceful, mustachioed neighbour, with the heliotrope and the bow. Englishmen, when they do attempt to bow to ladies, should take lessons from a Portuguese cavalier."

Markwell was about to retort, but Ada exclaimed:

"If you wish me to think you obliging, you will arrange for our dark-eyed admirer to be of the party to-morrow;" and then turning to Edward, she said:

"Come, Feramorz, your spirits seem low; let us have a ramble in the garden, and I will talk to you in music;" and she took up a small instrument, not unlike a lute. Edward followed, but Minnie did not.

The night was calm; nature seemed asleep and voiceless; an evening air was whispering around, as if gently sighing in dreams: the tops of the mountains and the horizon of the sea were silvered with the beams of the rising moon, leaving the Vigia garden in partial twilight. Scarcely a word passed before Ada began to play and sing. Wondrous were the sweet accords and plaintive

sounds which issued from that instrument, touched by that strange girl's hand. Great was her authority over expression, and the power was true; for it awakened a kindred feeling in the breast of the listener. Ada sang in a strange tongue; and her song was teeming with sadness one moment, and passionate emotion the next. The music surpassed the words; the voice infinitely excelled both music and words. Edward's heart throbbed. Markwell came out on the terrace—Ada was mute in a moment, and the next she was gone, simply echoing his "Good-night." Markwell followed her with his eyes; then looking slily at his friend, he hummed:

> "Beware—beware
> Her flashing eyes,
> Her floating hair!"

Edward laughed off his embarrassment, and asked if Mr. Ryland was going to Camacha on the morrow.

"Yes," Markwell said; "I call for them at ten o'clock. You will go, of course."

Edward replied that he would think about it,

and Markwell left. Edward did think about it and determined on not going.

"I will not accompany Mr. Ryland any more," he said, "until I have spoken; then, as *he* pleases."

Edward was right. This sensitive pride of principle may sometimes influence a man a little perversely, but in the main it serves to steady those variations of feeling which torment the mind in a time of anxiety and apprehension.

CHAPTER XXX.

"I REALLY think we should speak openly to Mr. Ryland, since he is evidently disinclined to do so with us," observed Edward to his aunt, as they met on the morning after the visit to Camacha.

"You are over-anxious, Edward. Pray, have patience."

"Patience! I have no patience with the word. This suspense is quite wearing my courage away; when I know the worst, however difficult my position may be, I hope to behave like a man. At present, I cannot understand Mr. Ryland in the least; he is close and frank by turns, cheerful and morose, observant and indifferent together. And Ada's behaviour partakes of all these singularities."

"A strange girl! As Lady Fleming said of Catherine Seaton: 'Heaven pity him who shall one day have a creature so fascinating to delight him, and a thing so mischievous to torment him!'"

"There is a great deal of nature and true feeling in her, though," replied Edward, warmly; and then he added: "For Minnie's sake, we ought to put an end to this strange state of things between us and Mr. Ryland. Do you not see how much she is changed?"

"I do, and sorrow over it. I quite enter into your feelings, Edward; but it is evident that Mr. Ryland suspects us relative to Minnie. I see how he watches both of you, and with no pleasant thoughts. Perhaps he was prejudiced upon this head before he left England, and wishes to observe a little more before he comes to a decided explanation. He may have been waiting for the letters which have arrived by the steamer this morning; it was very unfortunate that I did not bring that packet with me. The first evening of Mr. Ryland's arrival, I told him that the papers to which he had made allusion

in his letters, were left in England. He appeared greatly vexed, and muttered something about 'a bootless journey.'"

"The very reason why we should make matters straight between us. We only want to do what is right, and delay in doing it is wrong. To allow ourselves to be suspected of wrong, is an injustice to both parties. What induces you to suppose Mr. Ryland watches me on account of Minnie? I am sure I have acted very consistently. Indeed, Minnie's manner towards me has been such——" and here Edward paused.

"Do you remember the moss-rosebud yesterday morning, when they were leaving for Camacha? It was very natural—*I* do not complain, but you know Aunt Mary is not Mr. Ryland. However, you shall have your way: to-morrow we will speak. See, they are returning from their ride. Be of good heart, Edward; look at our treasure,—the dear face so expressive of tenderness and anxiety. She belongs to us yet."

Miss Weston, as she welcomed her guests, said to Mr. Ryland—

"There are letters for you on the dining-table."

Ada was off in a moment. She reached the dining-room, and gathered up the letters with a wild impulsive action, and began to search amongst them for something she certainly did not find; for tears burst into her eyes as she said, "How cruelly he has treated me!" At the instant she spoke, she encountered her father's look—a gaze of earnest sorrow. She cast the letters from her, and hastily left the room. Mr. Ryland followed Ada's steps with an anxious eye; then he beckoned Minnie to him, and said—

"Will you go to Ada? Say not a word to others, let me beg of you, of what you see; but strive to exercise your influence in the best way you can."

Minnie followed Mr. Ryland's injunctions so far as to trace Ada to her room. Their rooms were contiguous; and Minnie entered hers, to collect her thoughts. A shade of alarm crept over her spirits; she could not have ascribed the sensation to any known cause, but it grew

and grew. To resist the influence, she moved, but very irresolutely, towards Ada's apartments. When Minnie reached the door, she gave a gentle tap, but no notice was taken of it. She tapped again and a little louder; still she stood without the summons to enter. Minnie was half-frightened; she felt a very great inclination to creep back to her own room; but, recollecting Mr. Ryland's words, she called her best fortitude to her aid, gently turned the handle of the door, and stood within the apartment. No wonder Minnie's nervous intimation of her visit was not noticed. Ada was seated on a small ottoman in the shadow of her room, with her back towards the door, her face covered with her hands; her riding-hat was on the floor, and her long dark hair was lying on her neck and shoulders. Minnie approached; she thought Ada was in tears, but she was deceived; for, the moment she was about to speak, Ada's hands were withdrawn, her face upraised, and there was a *whispering*, as Minnie afterwards called to mind, of an air so touching and pathetic, that she lost the power

to speak: volition itself seemed charmed away. Then came something—Minnie could not define it—something too pathetic for a song and wanting in the reverence of a hymn. The tongue Minnie knew not; but the air was most thrilling, plaintive, and bewildering, and its effect upon her senses was ever indescribable. She sank down upon a seat near, and gazed with a sort of mysterious alarm towards the Indian girl.

That wild impassioned being had yielded herself to feelings upon which Minnie trembled to look. She would have escaped from the room unrecognised, but like a person subject to the baleful influence of nightmare, she felt fear in every limb, but struggled without the power to move. Ada's voice recalled Minnie to herself.

"How came you here?—and why are you here?"

"Oh, Ada!" answered Minnie, looking up, with sudden alarm at the abruptness of the question, which was not diminished as she encountered the cold, proud, imperious gaze bent upon her. "You terribly frighten me. Do not be angry

with me, Ada. You are unhappy. Tell me, Ada, and I will give you my deepest sympathy."

"I have no faith in any human being; no care for one, and I cannot repose in you. May I not be left to weep over my own sorrows after my own fashion? For the past week I have acted the hypocrite, but I will not do so now. Hush! I cannot show you my soul. Its will is mysterious, like that of Him you call your God. I am alone. A stranger in a strange land. Leave me to my loneliness."

"Like that of Him I call my God!" cried Minnie. "Oh, Ada! is He not your God too? The Father of the fatherless, ever ready to succour those who trust in him? Oh, Ada, pray with me; dear, Ada, come!" and Minnie took Ada's hand, but it was coldly withdrawn. Still Minnie held out her arms imploringly; but a dark spirit was over that untaught nature.

"I have prayed my prayer," Ada said, "and you heard it."

"Oh, Ada!" said Minnie, very sorrowfully, "was *that* meant for a prayer? It seemed to me

the passionate wail of a strange spirit. It was not, Ada, the voice of a child asking good things from its father."

"It was my prayer! I learnt it before I heard of any other prayer."

"Hush, Ada, hush! be calm and think. Why should you cruelly impose upon your better nature?—and why do you startle and alarm me by such strange words? You are cruel, Ada, to me, and to yourself. Dear Ada, give me authority to speak to you about good things, which lead us to happiness. I know a little, and I would seek more for you. Let me be your dear friend, Ada, in heart and act; let me share your sorrows. Ada! indeed I will love you very dearly. I am not so happy as I was, and therefore my mind will think earnestly for you; but, Ada, you must promise me you will not say such dreadful words again, for God is love, and without Him you cannot love me."

Minnie's pleading, pathetic manner appeared to exercise a soothing influence, for the impassioned girl answered with a touch of melancholy:

"You will not love me long. You of all others will hate me. I have no hold on affection. No one ever loved me long. I know this and it curses me. Before the next moon wanes, *you* will know what I mean."

"Oh! never! never!" cried Minnie, very earnestly: "I shall never hate you, Ada! You are the loved one of your father—and how kind he has been to me! like a parent to me! and I feel to him almost like a child; and I look on you almost as my sister. No; I should never hate you, Ada! if you were to come to kill me, I could not hate you."

"But if I kill your heart?" said the Indian girl, in a sort of whisper, suddenly resuming her tone of wildness, "if I were to rob it of its jewel, its hope, and leave it lone and desolate,—the tomb of earthly joys,—would you love me then?"

"Yes, Ada, I should pray to do so."

"Then you are a weak fool. I should pray for an opportunity to kill you: yes—loved as you are by all,—and glory in the deed!"

Minnie drew back in alarm, so expressive was her gesture, so significant the voice in which she had spoken. But recovering herself, she said:—

"Why such strange words, Ada? I shall ever love you, even should you despoil me of the truest hopes of my heart."

"Is it your religion which makes you so good? I feel you are good: that is what enrages me. What is it?"

Minnie now thought it a good opportunity to say, "Our religion must be the same, dear Ada; your father ——" Here the Indian girl interrupted, proudly—

"Had nothing to do with me until my mother died. She had the blood of Bhotan Princes in her veins. Her worship was theirs, and mine hers, until I was thirteen years of age. Be silent: I will trust you with our history, but you must not tell my father, or you would call down his anger upon me. My mother, as I have said, was of the pure blood of princes of an independent State, and her soul runs as a destiny through me. She was beautiful. You think me so: ah! had you

seen her! The difference between us is as great as between the light of a star in the night-time and when it pales before the morning. My parents did not live happily. You cannot think what I have seen, nor how my mother suffered. You see those sufferings all over my face. I can never get them from my eyes. I see them whenever I look into the mirror. My father is a stern man when the fit is upon him. If things go as he wishes and approves, he is kind; but if he is thwarted in his aims, his whole nature grows iron. You must not tell him what I say; for since we came to England, he watches me: and, Minnie, he watches you."

Minnie exclaimed, "Watches me! he is always kind."

"He has some motive for his kindness, for he never gives a thought to strangers. He believes you to be bound up in our destiny, and tells me I must love you as I love him. I do not understand, and he will not tell me more,—no more than that *your* friends are his enemies: that they have done him foul wrong."

"What! mamma, and—and Edward?" burst from Minnie's lips.

"He says Edward Graham's friends; that they have used him for their purposes, and he will show them who it is they have used. I do not understand."

A host of strange thoughts rushed through Minnie's mind. She was not able to form a rational idea. Her fate bound to one who looked upon her sole steadfast friend, and Edward, as his foes! It was to her a more than distressing idea. All the cold restraint,—the break in the old sunny confidence,—was cruel indeed; but this additional source of trial was more than she could bear, and she summoned nerve to say—

"Others may be false, Ada, but not Miss Weston or Edward. I should lose all hope of happiness to feel they had been guilty of the crime your father imputes to them. You must not speak in such a way to me again. An imputation touching the character of a dear friend should never be left unexplained, and it seems a duty to Miss Weston and to Edward to tell them of this accusation."

"Would you be a traitor?" Ada cried. "I told you this in trust and confidence!"

"We should hold nothing in confidence if an explanation would clear the accused. However, Ada, in this I will not betray you."

Minnie's manner was so grave and earnest that it appeared to have quite an influence for good over Ada;—it was so new to her. She looked half-tamed, particularly as Minnie, after thinking a little, said—

"We have wandered from the subject, Ada dear. You were speaking of your private history."

"Yes; I was going to say, my father thinks he has converted me to his religion. He calls my mother's a pernicious and hateful superstition; and says that our priests and philosophers in India are fanatics. I do not think so. I learnt what I was taught, and it grew in me, or came to me with the blood of the race from which I am descended. It is the genius of my nature. I must teach you its mysteries, that is what I want to say. You will then be my friend, my

heart, my sister; you will give me life: you will learn—" and Ada bent over her companion with a fascination of manner peculiarly her own when her feelings were roused. Minnie took Ada's hand, and said, tenderly—

"We will learn together, Ada. Yes, from the Book of Life. My mamma will show you how our hearts may be united in love for ever, and at our death be scarcely divided." Minnie's earnest, pleading face was a strange contrast to the wild flash of anger and scorn which appeared to flood the young Indian's brain.

"Leave me!" cried she, pointing to the door, "thou puling missionary! Thou wouldst rob me of the sole treasure of my life. The first night I saw thee, I looked into the stars, and read—" here she broke off into a strange tongue, and Minnie, with a deep sigh, glided from the room. Poor Minnie knew not what to think. She wished to be Ada's friend; but how could she be such, whilst Ada allowed the passion of her wild, untamed nature to hold the reins of her feelings and conduct. Minnie felt she did not possess

that quality or temper of mind to contend with the energetic, impetuous, and changeable Indian. They had touched upon a mystery relative to which Minnie had not been taught to argue. There was in the mind of Minnie's instructor that love of religion, pure and simple, which made *her* teach her charge to look up to it with reverence, taking its schoolings as the word of wisdom and its precepts as a certain guide, even though the thought did not comprehend the full aim. As Minnie entered her room, and strove to reflect on what had passed between her and Ada, her heart was sorely troubled. It took but little to give her sorrow; but now the sorrow was overlaid with fear; a fear mingled with astonishment, and constantly excited by curiosity.

Some time elapsed before either of the girls left their respective apartments. Ada excused her absence by saying she had been unhappy, and when she was so she preferred being left to herself. Mr. Ryland scanned Minnie with keen earnestness. She was uncomfortable under the scrutiny. This he saw, and turned again to his occupation.

He was looking through a portfolio of drawings and sketches, some of which were only partly finished. Minnie, although Ada's assertions had rendered her not a little nervous, moved to Mr. Ryland's side.

"A pretty landscape," he said, placing the object of his criticism before him, "but full of errors. Nothing is really beautiful in art but what is true according to the law of nature. Here we have the weeping ash, and a graceful species of the larch growing luxuriantly on the same soil. This is a representation contrary to natural facts. A landscape painter ought to know something besides the mere harmony of colours and the rudiments of design. He should be instructed in botany and mineralogy. In introducing trees into a landscape, an artist is scarcely deserving the name, unless he knows something of the soil in which they grow, and the trees that flourish in company; for they exercise no slight influence on the pictorial result." Edward Graham rose from his chair as he heard these remarks, and walked up to the group; resolving, if he had an opportunity, to

answer these criticisms. Mr. Ryland had turned to another sheet. It was a classic figure, upon which he only deigned to bestow the following caustic speech!

"Figures have been used up by our schoolmasters, the ancients. It would be very difficult for an artist to produce a new position without going beyond the canons of good taste; and I detest copies, they are like echoes, beneath nature."

"Ha! what is this?" the critic cried, now holding up a sheet before him and placing it in a good light. "Although half-finished it has breadth and vigour, distinctness and originality—a strange subject! It appears to be the form of the denouncing angel resting on a cloud, midway between earth and heaven, with the shades of night gathering over it. It certainly bespeaks genius." And Mr. Ryland's eye was bent with a new kind of interest upon Minnie.

"Oh! it is not my work; Edward"——Minnie paused, for Ada's words came to her mind, and she appeared to lose the power of speech. Edward

stepped in to Minnie's rescue. He leant forward with that attractive confidence which even a sensitive person feels when he is thoroughly master of his subject, and said—

"I have always thought that the finest thing in 'Paradise Lost' was the speech of Satan at the beginning of the ninth book, in which pride, and indignation, and envy are blended with an involuntary approbation of goodness and disdain of the meanness of his present undertaking. After reading this speech lately, and studying its nature, I had the vanity to think I could catch the spirit of the infidel orator, and traced off the skeleton idea in your hand, with the intention of completing it when my health would permit."

Mr. Ryland elevated his brows when Edward commenced speaking, and when he had finished, he simply inclined his head in acknowledgment of the explanation.

"Give me that sketch, Feramorz," Ada said. "I like devils, and yours is a noble one."

"*You like* devils," exclaimed Edward, in comic alarm.

"Yes! we have hosts in India; a thunder and lightning devil is my passion."

"Ada!" cried Mr. Ryland, with stern significance. Ada was gone. He closed the portfolio, and appeared to resign himself to a fit of abstraction. During the afternoon, however, he once gave Miss Weston a partial insight into his broodings. Ada was standing at the further end of the room, still as a statue, gazing westward at a fine sunset. The partial languor of the attitude, the pensive grace of the countenance, blending with an expression of superstitious reverence, presented her in a fresh light to Miss Weston. As she stood, she breathed a few notes in a low, thrilling cadence. Mr. Ryland's breast appeared to rise and swell as he gazed upon his Indian child; a sudden change came over his face; and addressing himself to Miss Weston, whose attention was evidently drawn to Ada, he said, with emotion—

"To whom can I resign the charge of a spirit of this nature? How strangely beautiful she looks! Should not a father be proud of such a possession? But when I feel so, a cloud comes

over my mind, a weight like lead falls upon my heart. Alas! Miss Weston, what will be her fate?"

Good Miss Weston, she could never listen to a word of sadness without seeking for an antidote. Her eyes rested on Minnie's sweet face, with its touching orphan look, as she answered with much feeling—

"We will take her with us, on our return to England, to Alegria; and our love shall be the talisman against the influence you fear. To-morrow we must have some talk together, you—and I, and Edward. After that, I think we may do much to contribute to each other's happiness."

"Edward!" slowly dropped from Mr. Ryland's lips, "a talk between us," and he frowned, "can scarcely lead to satisfactory results." Then he rose from his seat and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"The influence of the demon, Ada! Pray, do not speak of these dreadful ideas."

"Minnie dear, I am not mistaken. You will understand me soon. They are gone to talk. Did you not see Edward go up to my father after breakfast, and hear him say they requested to have some conversation with him?—and did you not notice my father's face? I did; and I know its expression, for I have read it often; and when I saw it just now, my dream came back to memory. Dark, Minnie, all dark; not a ray of light in the landscape. Come," and she hastened her down the terrace—"let us sit in the Mirante and watch. We shall see my father come forth in anger, and he will take us away for ever from your friends to India, Minnie.

He has said so to me, and my dream said so too; and the demon I have told you of guided us on the way, and just as we started a cat crossed our path."

But for the last few words, Minnie's courage would have failed her. Now her love of the humorous came to her aid. To save her life she could not have helped saying—

"What had the cat to do with our journey, Ada?"

"A bad omen!" exclaimed Ada, with emphasis.

"But, perhaps it had no tail?" questioned Minnie. "The Portuguese cats seldom have any."

Ada's eyes flashed as she said—

"Mock me if you will. When you are in India, you will know better."

"I will never go to India," cried Minnie. "Mr. Ryland may go, and you may go; but I belong to England. How can your father compel me to sacrifice my own happiness?"

"You will see. We shall soon know what

is vision, and what is truth. Hush! Minnie; let us watch!" And Ada threw back her head and gazed forward, in communion it seemed with some invisible being.

As Ada had intimated, Mr. Ryland looked not only surprised and uneasy, but very stern, when Edward said to him after breakfast that *they* wished to have some private conversation with him. The fact was that, on finding the papers entrusted by Mr. Seaton to Miss Weston had been left in England, Mr. Ryland considered his journey, so far as explanations and personal interests were concerned, a bootless one. He had therefore resolved on passing a few weeks in Madeira, expecting to prevail on Miss Weston to return to England with him. At present, he did not see the necessity of opening a question which could end, according to his ideas, in conjecture. Therefore, when Edward spoke to him, it was evident, from his fixed look at Minnie, that Mr. Ryland associated her with the burden of this requested conference, and thought the design was to ensnare him in an implicit under-

standing of their evident love for each other; in fact, that Edward was striving to steal a march upon time, and out-scheme him. Consequently his mood was grim. When the two were assembled in Edward's little room, Miss Weston looked singularly nervous. She moved uneasily in her chair, twisted a ring off, and appeared in difficulty about getting it on again; then looked up anxiously into Edward's face, who, misunderstanding her, was about to speak, when she checked him, saying—

"I must speak first, Edward." Then turning abruptly to her guest, whose eyebrows formed the arch of sarcastic surprise, she said—

"Mr. Ryland, it is now some twelve years since you wrote to Mr. Seaton from India, asking him to obtain an introduction for you to a London house of note, that would be willing to take charge of, and negotiate for you, certain shipments of merchandise which you might have occasion to consign to it. Mr. Seaton, as you were possibly aware, was a novice in business matters. He consulted his friend and

neighbour, my father;—who answered, 'It is the sort of thing for my partner Graham.' It was so arranged; and on the grounds of my father's stability, your connexion, Mr. Ryland, with the firm of Weston and Graham commenced." Miss Weston paused. Mr. Ryland looked perplexed and grim, but made no observation.

"The connexion between you and Mr. Graham (for my father died a few years after it commenced)," pursued Miss Weston, "has assumed, I find, a much graver character than my father ever anticipated. But this would have made no difference to my father, for he was one who was upright in small as well as in great matters. He believed he had placed your interest in good hands, for the house of Weston and Graham stood deservedly high in the business world. From respect to my father's memory, I must now speak plainly. It is with unfeigned grief, Mr. Ryland, (as I wrote to you some time since, which letter, I presume, you could not have received,) that I say my confidence in the firm

in question is shaken: nay, that I am aware that the affairs of the house are in a very critical state from indiscreet railway speculations."

Mr. Ryland did not appear to be startled, or even surprised, only a little mystified by such plain speaking. He looked up frankly into Edward's troubled face, and said—

"Is it really necessary that you should be a party to this conversation?"

"It is," was the answer. "But I am grateful for your implied kindness."

Mr. Ryland's manner changed. He looked like a man who suddenly becomes aware he has been all wrong. He crossed his legs, and looked pleasant. He seemed even strangely indifferent to what had been revealed; at least, he made no remarks on the subject. Edward was surprised and Miss Weston shared in the feeling. But, thinking it necessary to touch upon Edward's making common cause with her in the disclosure, she said—

"Edward knows my thoughts upon this pain-

ful business; we are of one mind in reference to this matter."

"Indeed!" observed Mr. Ryland, quietly looking from one to the other. "Pardon me, if I appear mystified. May I ask you whence you obtained your knowledge of Mr. Graham's affairs?"

"Have I your permission to speak?" Miss Weston asked of Edward.

Edward bent his head in acquiescence, and after a short pause, she said with emotion—

"Edward was my informant, Mr. Ryland. Much unhappiness has befallen him on account of his having striven to the utmost of his power to maintain justice in the dealings of the firm with your capital. His sorrows were my enlightenment."

Mr. Ryland was evidently astonished. However, he made no comment, but appeared to study Edward's face with curiosity. Presently he said—

"How are you situated, Miss Weston, in a pecuniary sense, with the firm in Mincing Lane? Pardon me—I presume your income is derivable

from the concern in which your father was chief."

"Not so," replied Miss Weston. "The Eling property was latterly my father's chief care; he bequeathed it to me. He also invested 10,000*l.* for Edward's benefit; *we* are not dependent upon the firm."

"I am glad you are safe; the *investment*, however, appears, as affairs stand, to have been rather premature,—perhaps unfortunately so."

Mr. Ryland spoke with curt emphasis. Edward's face flushed crimson. He was about to make a hasty reply, when the elder man silenced him with a motion of the hand, and added—

"I am glad you are safe, Miss Weston: women should be protected by bond and deed from the speculative possibilities of kindred or of friends, I was going to say, and from their own." Then after a short pause, he continued: "Your conduct, Miss Weston, in this delicate business, is worthy of you. I can do you no higher justice; but pardon me, if, before I proceed further, I say to

you, Mr. Graham, that I am at a loss to understand why you are a party to these disclosures."

"My reason, Mr. Ryland," replied Edward, with painful emphasis, "for being present at this interview, shall now be explained to you. Months before I left England I became aware that the settlement which you desired to effect of the money due to you by the firm had not been executed in the sense you desired. I did what I could to rectify the error, but without avail. My father felt he could discharge his liabilities to you at will; but he was suddenly overtaken by a depreciation in the value of railway scrip and other assumed securities, which I am satisfied must strip him of the power of making matters straight between you. You have returned from India with the intention of investigating your position with the firm."

"Yes; but it was so cold on my arrival in England that I had not nerve to commence the unpleasant work. I thought I would leave it for warmer weather. I must, however, set to it

at once. You have warmed my fingers with a vengeance."

"Pardon me," said Edward, very earnestly, "if I appear selfish in seeking to deprecate this course. I have not been a party to these disclosures either to my father's injury, nor solely for your advantage; but mainly because I felt it right to make them. Yet having acted on the dictates of my own conscience, I am not disposed to shrink from the responsibility attaching to the attempt to mediate between parties situated as you and my father are."

"Had you Aladdin's lamp, Mr. Graham, or the annual gold mine Dickens speaks of, mediation were easy: as it is, the only mediator I know of is the law."

"I trust not—I trust not," cried Edward, eagerly. "Listen to me, Mr. Ryland. You said just now that the investment my grandfather had made in my favour was rather premature—I understand the implication; but I maintain that it was a justifiable act, justified by the common-sense rule that a man has a right to do what he

likes with his own. However, had you known my resolution you would have spared me the ungenerous remark."

"Your resolution, Mr. Graham?" questioned Mr. Ryland, with elevated brow.

"Is to cast this sum of money, and that which it has realized, amounting to nearly 15,000*l.*, into the concern; to return to my father's side; to work with him and for you, and endeavour, by success, to atone for the pain my father must experience on hearing that his son has placed him in such a position with his old correspondent. My stake will not be so large as your debt; but I have the comfort of feeling it is my all."

"Edward, of what are you dreaming?" cried Miss Weston, in alarm.

"My resolution is taken, my dear Aunt," answered Edward, firmly. "I have a knowledge of my father's business: not a man in the concern will fail me in my hour of need. See this," cried he, with a flush of pride, taking the old blotting-book, presented to him by Ellis, from his desk, and handing it to Mr. Ryland, "such were the

terms upon which I stood with them in Mincing Lane; and is there not a hope of success even in that testimony of good will. And now I have said so much," and he looked with earnest deference into Mr. Ryland's face, "I must add that I look to you for forbearance."

Mr. Ryland was scanning the old blotting-book: "A curious document," he said; "my name amongst the others, too; just at the tail end of the *g* in *Seebright!*"

Edward quickly explained the circumstance.

"Hem!" Mr. Ryland's forefinger went to his brow. "Curious! Ada would think you a sort of seer. Accidental—but accidents have value. So, Mr. Graham, you endorse my name, eh, without being asked? It seems we have had a sort of second-hand connection with each other for some time. I am not a little confounded. Therefore, whilst I preserve a small amount of sober sense, please state the full meaning of your term—forbearance."

"You are my father's principal creditor; in fact, the only creditor, I believe, of any import-

ance; and I ask you, in the event of my father's acquiescence in my views, to delegate to me the power to protect your interests."

"Your father's interests, I suppose you mean?" observed Mr. Ryland, in a slightly ironical tone.

"I have given you evidence of the integrity of my purpose," said Edward, warmly, "and my words poorly explain my desires, if you can still find matter at which to take exception." Checking himself, Edward pursued with graver earnestness: "Take my words as I speak them, Mr. Ryland, and I will show you the grounds upon which I base my plea for forbearance. If, now you are in possession of facts, you proceed to extremities, and, with the aid of the law, attempt to enforce a settlement of your just claims, the result would be calamitous. On the other hand, if you find the undue pressure of speculation removed from legitimate business, and its resources in a fair way to flow into the proper channel, would it not be wise on your part, in anticipation of the improvement of affairs, to give time, so that the renovation should not be hampered by undue

pressure at the moment of its commencement."

"Let me see, Mr. Graham: There will be 15,000*l.* certain. You have intimated to me your intention of returning this money to the concern. So far so good. 15,000*l.* will pay me about 12*s.* 6*d.* in the pound—not a bad dividend as things go. Of course you will keep to your word?"

Edward looked a *little* surprised, and said—

"My conduct in this matter will be regulated by your generosity. I act my part for the benefit of the whole—for my father's personal honour as well as his mercantile reputation."

"And now," said Mr. Ryland, quietly, "what course do you propose to pursue in reference to your father? Because it seems to me you are talking rather abstractly upon a subject of great practical interest."

"I shall inform my father of what I have done by the first mail; and if I can convey your consent to my propositions, I shall be able to propose a plan for the future." Edward paused for a few

moments, then he added: "I am satisfied that if my father will curtail his expenditure, and amend a system of business which requires clipping, he may be redeemed from his present unsatisfactory position."

"And you wish me to place the *shears* in your hands?" observed Mr. Ryland, smiling naturally, for the first time during the conference.

"I do," cried Edward, his face in a glow of emotion. "I will never relax my efforts till my father is replaced in his former position."

"I will think about it," said Mr. Ryland. "I am about to do that, Mr. Graham, in compliment to your integrity, which I have not done with any man for twenty years. It is to speak my mind with the confidence that, in doing so, the indiscretion will not be used against me. I am sure you are sincere, and that you would do with rare ability likewise all that a man with little worldly experience could, to triumph in your self-imposed labour. My manner must have convinced you that I am no stranger to the state of affairs in

the house of Graham. I had not been one week in England before I had a strong suspicion that things were going wrong with your father. I know mankind pretty well, Mr. Graham; and men of the Slivery and Elpingstone stamp, perfectly. I was confident that Sir George Elpingstone's position in your father's house was maintained at no small expense to your father, and that their interests were more identified than need be; that fashion had converted the trader into a gambler, and that a very imposing salvage went into the fashion's hands. How I found this out, I need not explain; self-interest makes a man of the world a dangerous guest to him who has cause to fear keen investigation. I saw and inferred. I will think well of what you propose; but you will agree with me that three-and-twenty thousand pounds is a large stake; and I do not hold even cards with Messrs. Graham and Elpingstone. I must see if I can readjust the hand. To relieve you of some anxiety, however, I must tell you that I did not, like the unthrifty housewife, put all my eggs into one basket. An old ally of your father's

seemed to surmise this, for he esteemed me good game. Indeed he offered—how he came to a knowledge of our affairs I am at a loss to understand—to arrange my business with your father on 'commission.'"

"You allude to Mr. Slivery!" cried Edward, indignantly.

"Yes; he appeared to claim your father as his *protégé;* only he says that for a man to whom the world attributes good sense, he has shown himself rather unprincipled."

Edward's lips quivered.

"You forget, Mr. Ryland," he said, "you speak of a father to a son."

"Pardon me!" said Mr. Ryland, holding out his hand with a cordial air. "You show me nature in her best garb. *Think better of me than I seem.* And now, if you please, I should like to have a few minutes' private conversation with Miss Weston."

"*Think better of me than I seem.*" These words were in Edward's ear and about his heart as he went out upon the terrace. He gazed up into the

flood of sunshine, and thanked God for giving him strength to be honest. At *the moment* he felt the great battle, although in reality not yet commenced, turning to victory. "*Think better of me than I seem!*" and spoken encouragingly, kindly, sincerely. No wonder the sunshine around Edward grew brighter and more bright!

"He comes, Minnie! he comes!" said one of the *watchers* in the Mirante, "and, Minnie, look! I never saw him like this before. His step is so firm, and his face beams with beautiful hope. There is a glow of life all over him. The demon told me wrong. See, he is going to the lower garden. He does not see us. Shall I call him?"

"No—no! dear Ada, no!" cried Minnie, pleadingly, with her face one glow of crimson; the next moment she flew across the terrace, and escaped to her room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"If the world acted, Miss Weston, as you and a good son of an unworthy father have acted towards me, good-bye to Chancery suits, and quirks and quibbles of law." Such was Mr. Ryland's remark to Miss Weston, when Edward left the room.

Miss Weston replied—

"Edward has been most anxious since the hour of your arrival to do what he felt to be his duty. He is anxious, too, that you should be assured of his sincerity. Indeed, he is so keenly susceptible upon this point that unless you show him you have entire confidence in him, he will be unable to face the difficulties before him. Is not that proposal of his, in reference to his property, a noble one?"

"A generous act. Were he twenty years older he would not have proposed it."

"You do not yet know Edward. Years strengthen, instead of weaken, these traits of nobleness. Pardon me, Mr. Ryland, in saying that it appears to me you have determined to steel your judgment against a belief in his worth." Miss Weston had said too much. She was betraying by over-zeal Edward's vantage-ground.

"If I saw him with your eyes," Mr. Ryland said, gravely, "I should feel towards him with your feelings. He is a young man of amiable disposition and great intellect, but his imagination is too active,—it unsettles his reason. In fact, his mind needs ballasting, Miss Weston. To tell the truth, I have been seduced by the candour and ingenuousness of his manner into going further than I intended: for the impulse to deviate, at his suggestion, solely on the ground of his good intentions, from the course usual in such affairs, comes from the heart rather than the head; and the latter, you know, should be our guide in dealing with men who lose sight

of those principles of which the former is regarded as the sentinel. I fear it will take me some time to learn to understand the things I see."

"A bad beginning this:" so Miss Weston thought. However, she held her tongue and looked grave—grim would be a better word.

Mr. Ryland looked as men do who mistrust a generous impulse.

"Are you aware," he asked, "that Sir George Elpingstone must have made himself acquainted with the nature of the packet Mr. Seaton intrusted to your care?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Miss Weston, "unless Mrs. Graham has betrayed her trust,—an act of which I cannot believe her capable."

"I fear *we* are surrounded by less innocent *friends* than you suppose, Miss Weston: the seemingly portionless Miss Seaton was not thought worthy of the honour of mating her destiny with Sir George Elpingstone solely on account of her very attractive person."

Miss Weston was roused; her honest heart spoke out at last:—

"And you, Mr. Ryland," she said, with emphasis, "are you dealing generously by us in shrouding circumstances in mystery which ought to have been explained when you arrived in England? In what relation do you stand to my *protégée?* It is indeed time for you to speak. My heart aches from the agitation of suspense and anxiety."

Mr. Ryland looked confused. Then his brows knit, and he answered—

"Had you been in England on my arrival, I should have acted in a way satisfactory to you. Had I found matters such as I foolishly expected in Grosvenor Square, I should have spoken as my heart dictated, even in your absence. Had you the packet by you now, we could place the subject, of such engrossing interest to both of us, at rest. But in the absence of those papers we can do nothing. My own explanation would be most unsatisfactory without them."

"Indeed, Mr. Ryland! You surprise and alarm me."

"You shall judge. Seaton and I married women who were dear friends. We resided together

at Cheltenham for a year or so after our marriage. Then my poor Lucy's health broke down, and I removed her to this island. The second winter of our sojourn here the Seatons joined us. Towards the spring of that year my wife gave birth to a daughter, and within a month of this event her resting-place was in the strangers' burial-ground. The child lived; Mrs. Seaton took to it, and said it should grow up by her side and in her heart. A short time after my bereavement I received notice that property had been left me by an uncle in India; and as I felt that I required action and change of scene, I left for the land which became for many years my home. You will conclude I left my child in Mrs. Seaton's care. A year or so after I had been in India I received a letter from her, telling me of the birth of a daughter, a companion, she said, for my little Meninha, for by this name my poor Lucy had had her darling christened. I realized upon the property left me, and travelled. I soon experienced the dangers into which a man falls by being set free from the conventional

checks imposed by society, by being idle and alone. A connection resulted, attended by danger. Woe and heartaches followed. Ada is the only living fruit of that ill-starred connection!" Mr. Ryland paused. A deep shade of gloom covered his face. Miss Weston looked dissatisfied.

"During this period did you not seek for information relative to your English child?" she asked.

"I should tell you that the Seatons heard of my new position. Mrs. Seaton wrote me under the impulse of indignation: I remained silent. In that letter she made no mention of the charge she had undertaken. With little congeniality or comfort in my Indian home, my temper became soured and my judgment perverted; I argued myself into the belief that the Seatons had behaved ungenerously towards me, and almost ceased to think of them. Satiated with idleness, I commenced business speculations, and my sphere of action was the Indian Archipelago. At first novelty pushed me on; then, when I made great gains, I found it agreeable

to be prosperous, and grew a trader. In the papers I saw the notice of Mrs. Seaton's death; I at once wrote to my old friend, condoling with him on his loss, asked for intelligence relative to the child left in his wife's charge, and suggested the subject which led to my connection with the firm of Weston and Graham. The reply I received from Mr. Seaton was grave and formal. Touching my child he said only that the child had gone where all anxiety about her was at an end. I pondered over these words, and decided in my own mind that the child was dead. Some time after this I received the letter forwarded to me after Mr. Seaton's death, to which I adverted in mine to you. In it the writer remarked that with regard to my child the conduct of my old friend had been in harmony with justice and propriety, and added that his conduct was explained in a communication entrusted to Miss Weston, residing at Eling, and that only to me personally, in your presence, would that communication be delivered. My suspicions," pursued Mr. Ryland, "were roused in consequence of this

allusion to some matter of moment which had to be thus communicated, and assuming from the name that you were probably connected with the firm of Weston and Graham, particularly as Mr. Seaton had introduced me to that house, I wrote to Mr. Graham on behalf, as I told him, of a brother. He replied to my inquiry that you had adopted a girl called Minnie Seaton, and regarded her in the light of your own child. My correspondent did his work indifferently; but I merited indifference, because I was not candid. Mrs. Seaton had told me of the birth of a daughter at Seville; and I am in a state of uncertainty even now as regards my relationship to your charge." After a short pause Mr. Ryland continued: "When I reached London my steps were bent to Eling. There I heard enough to satisfy me that the child had been placed in just hands—that there the orphan girl had many friends. The old Squire to whom I introduced myself spoke with genuine tenderness of your Birdie, and bade me, if I was the man William Wynne Ryland from India, to look her up in Grosvenor Square,

and see how they were treating her. The hint proved of great service; the name of your cottage surprised me. A locality of that name here had been poor Lucy's favourite ramble: within a pretty pink cottage on that mountain side our child was born. Can you wonder that the name, the well-remembered name of Alegria, served as a memento of my old friend's faithfulness? I can scarcely tell you what my feelings were."

Miss Weston pondered gravely over what she had heard.

"You sought to effect a liberal investment on behalf of your *daughters* Meninha and Ada?" she said, inquiringly.

"I did, and in doing so, I was influenced by two considerations. If your *protégée* proved to be my child, I had done her but a tardy act of justice; if Seaton's daughter, I was bent upon adopting her, and ——"

"Indeed, Mr. Ryland," exclaimed Miss Weston, looking her very sternest, "if Minnie is your child, do a father's duty; if Mr. Seaton's daughter, she is mine."

"Gently, dear madam. Your pardon, if I have unwittingly hurt your feelings. As Seaton's daughter, your *protégée* merited much at my hands. By this unity of interest I sought to blend her worldly weal with Ada's, insuring to the latter a companion, possibly a friend. You see how greatly Ada needs feminine influence and sympathy."

Miss Weston still looked grim, particularly at the half-selfish nature of the last remark.

"And Sir George Elpingstone," she said, "was nominated by you joint trustee with Mr. Graham over this blended interest."

"Elpingstone," cried Mr. Ryland, starting up, "nominated by me! Indeed, I never heard a breath of it! This is worse than all the rest:" and he muttered an oath. "A responsible friend, Mr. Graham wrote to me, had joined him in this trust. So Sir George Elpingstone is the responsible friend, eh? We shall see the extent of his responsibility. Upon my honour, this is a bad business. It looks bad; it means worse. Of course I saw when in London that I had been deceived;

but I could not act openly, for I wanted to get Minnie out of their hands. Pray, madam, how came you in possession of these facts?"

"Edward informed me of them. He did his utmost to remedy the evil, and suffered much in consequence."

"Indeed, indeed! He is truly our hero. Then he must be my witness against them. I will indict them for felony; Edward must pull me through, since he dares to do rash things to evince his honesty. I have no scrap of evidence as to this trust, no deed of settlement, no copy of instructions; I have gone headlong into the mire. Write me down the veriest booby in existence." Having blown his passion off in self-abuse, Mr. Ryland sat down, apologized, and appeared better.

"It has suddenly occurred to me," said Miss Weston, "that Sir George Elpingstone has gathered his convictions or impressions relative to Minnie from your instructions in regard to the settlement. Blending Mr. Graham's partial knowledge of affairs with inferences to be drawn from your letter of advice upon this business, he forms a

shrewd guess that Minnie is, after all, a lady of some little importance. I lean to this supposition rather than to the idea that Mrs. Graham has tampered with the papers entrusted to her honour."

"Possibly; and when he saw poor Minnie was not quite so ductile as he wished—although but for the remark of the old Squire's, I believe she would have been Lady Elpingstone by this time—he turned his fascinations upon Ada. I see through it now."

"And Ada?" questioned Miss Weston, anxiously.

"For her I fear. She had never been in such juxta-position with a man of such an appearance and so varied accomplishments. We had lived a sort of Prospero and Miranda life."

"Poor Ada!" escaped from Miss Weston's lips.

"*You* pity her! yet some would envy," said her father, proudly.

"I pity her: for, Mr. Ryland, my Minnie tells me that Ada's soul is dark; or worse, that it is subject to illusions that shroud her impulsive mind in superstitious terrors. A parent's duty, Mr. Ryland, was to have shielded her from this

living death." Mr. Ryland's bronzed cheek flushed; a fleeting frown passed over his face, but, curbing his feeling, he said, sadly—

"Then your *protégée* has discovered Ada's failing? I thought as much. Poor Ada! Her mind is as you have said. I see it all, and the misery which will overtake us! To you I will now speak plain, for I hope to enlist your sympathies in my Indian child's welfare. I have told you that I knew trouble in my Indian home. Still, as I review the past, I am conscious that my troubles came chiefly from my own errors. It is commonly so, I think. When my Indian wife died, the charge of Ada devolved upon me. My heart warmed towards the girl, so lovely, so wild, so wayward; and I strove to do my duty to her. But the task was strange. She was twelve years old when her mother died. I sought to model her mind after my fancy, to expand the reasoning faculties, drive away the cloud of superstition which obscured them, to engraft the few accomplishments I could command upon her apt understanding; so much,

and scarcely more, I sought to do for her in my retreat in India. In regard to religion, I am obliged to confess that, living in easy indifference to it myself, I thought little about it upon my child's account. The only fancy I entertained upon this head was, to leave her to the promptings of her own mind; and I even now think that the more religious inclinations are voluntary and free, the better. But then I agree to what I am sure you will say, that the right path should be pointed out, the true bent given: but I did neither. In fine, I was rash enough to think that as the tendency of her mind was to truth, I had better leave religion to that tendency, and when it prompted inquiry, do my best to satisfy it. Ada never made that inquiry; and, in the course of time, I found that the *first* impression had worked with a baleful influence. She had reached girlhood in the belief of her mother's hateful superstitions, and her soul was deeply impregnated with them. Then it was that I awoke from my error, and thought of the time when my mother instructed me in good. I studied

the Bible for her sake. What I sought for her calmed my own fierce nature, but did her little good."

Miss Weston heard Ada's voice in the garden.

"May Providence," she said, in a low, earnest tone, "avert calamity from you."

Her companion caught the words, and cried—

"My whole nature echoes your prayer. Do not think me unnatural, dear madam, for not dwelling with more apparent anxiety upon the unsatisfactory position of affairs relative to your sweet *protégée.* I see her after all my fears, in safe hands. My anxiety upon Ada's account, since I saw what they were about in Grosvenor Square, has claimed so much attention that I have scarcely mind for aught besides. You have no doubt felt that danger impending over one who is very dear, removes for a time all other feelings, however earnest."

"I have experienced the feeling; it weighs *twofold* upon my heart even now."

Mr. Ryland evidently understood Miss Weston.

"How must I act towards your charge?" he

asked. "From the hour I saw her in London, my sympathies have been irresistibly drawn to her; but there remains a grave doubt over her connection with me. As my daughter, need I say, she would be a treasure to me beyond price. As Seaton's daughter, she must henceforth be under my care."

"Excuse me," said Miss Weston, promptly, "as Minnie Seaton, there will be no change of guardianship."

Mr. Ryland looked hurt and confused.

"We shall be better friends, Miss Weston, some day. Must the reserve between me and your charge be still maintained?"

Miss Weston reflected long: at last she said—

"I think it would be wise to prepare her mind for what those papers may disclose: I will do it gradually. We have been wrong in all this silence. I will write to Mr. Graham by the first mail to send the packet."

"I would go after it," said Mr. Ryland, "but that it would be indiscreet in me to show myself in Grosvenor Square again whilst affairs are as

they are. You had better write; but mark me, Miss Weston, it will give us some trouble to regain those papers."

"Had we not better return to England immediately, then?" said Miss Weston, nervously.

"It would seem so," was the reply. "My heart says 'yes,' but reason does not agree. I must arrange—combine; the stake is large: I really must have time to think. Besides, Ada ——"

Mr. Ryland remained so long silent that his companion was going, thinking the conference over for the present.

"A minute longer," he said, as she rose from her seat. "I hope you will not think my question out of place. I wish to know the position of affairs at this present time between your nephew and your *protégée*. I think my situation justifies the question."

"It may, or it may not; all depends."

"These young people love each other," pursued Mr. Ryland, grimly enough.

"Strange if they did not," said Miss Weston, with pleasant humour.

"I saw it all as soon as I saw them together. Eyes learn more than ears in these matters. How dares he love *my daughter?*"

"Not so fast, good sir, I pray you. My nephew has behaved most honourably. Should it turn out that you are indeed Minnie's parent, you will have no cause of complaint against him. Until your position is defined, you have no right to judge him."

"True: but if, as I am strongly tempted to believe, I *do* stand in a close and responsible relationship towards her, I must say to you that a connection between a Ryland and a Graham is impossible—impossible, madam!" repeated Mr. Ryland, with emphasis.

"And, sir," cried Miss Weston, with promptitude, "if my charge proves to be simply Minnie of the Alegria, *our* Minnie Seaton in heart and name, Edward's claim to her is founded upon the devotion of a noble heart, and his provident generosity in her behalf has secured to her pecuniary independence. Therefore, as Mr. Seaton's daughter, Minnie will not need the provision

you intended to make for her; and, after me, Edward shall be her guardian."

"I do not understand you! Pray, explain. What power has this young man to do as you imply?" asked Mr. Ryland, with knitted brow.

"The property I enjoy," said Miss Weston, "reverts to Edward at my death, without restriction. I casually mentioned this fact to him some time since, and he, on his becoming of age, transferred his interest in the Eling estate to Minnie Seaton by deed of gift, and appointed Mr. Lovell and the old Squire her trustees. I approved. Minnie and Alegria should never be parted."

"I had better go back to India," said Mr. Ryland, oddly, as he rose to his feet. "A man must have winged brains to thread the mazes of such a romantic and strange complexity of circumstances."

* * * * *

"May I sit by you for a few minutes?" Mr. Ryland said to Minnie, as she started up from the sofa on his entering the room. Both Minnie's

little hands were placed in his, and a thrill appeared to shoot through every nerve of her frame. He would never forget the earnest, hoping, quivering look the dear girl fixed upon him. Mr. Ryland was the first to break the silence. He spake some words of kindness; still Minnie's soft, truthful, trusting eyes were fixed upon him, and in them a something more touching far than words.

"Our kind friend has told you why I sought you out in Grosvenor Square—why I have appeared to exercise authority over your destiny?"

"Yes; she has told me. I shall understand all better soon; I have for some time felt that I can look upon the way in which I was thrown into your hands only as an immediate interference of Providence."

"It will be a boon, sweet girl, surpassing expression if events decide that you are in truth my daughter. The first hour I saw you, I felt attracted towards you. Since we have been together, I have felt that to find you other than

my heart prays I may find you, would be a bitter grief indeed."

"I must not think you are deceived, or my heart would break," said Minnie, with a glow of beautiful emotion over her cheek and brow. Then her head sank down upon Mr. Ryland's hands; and when Miss Weston came, she found her treasure half-fainting.

"We must treat her with great delicacy," Miss Weston said to Mr. Ryland, after conducting Minnie from the room. "I never saw anyone so completely overpowered by emotion as she was when I broke the subject to her just now. She wept one moment just as though her heart would burst, then broke into tender expressions of praise and thankfulness; the next calling Ada sister, and you her dear father, with such ineffable gratitude of heart that my prior knowledge of her affectionate nature appeared poor by the new light in which it was revealed to me."

"But if fate should deceive us at last?" said Mr. Ryland, gloomily.

"We should be guilty of wronging Nature if

we supposed so," came hopefully from the lips of this all-hoping friend. But no sooner had these words fallen than her thoughts, with sudden revulsion, were all with Edward.

"Poor Edward! if so, what will be his doom?"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"It is good!" Such was the exclamation of Mr. Ryland, as he perused a letter which had been sent to him by Miss Weston. It was Edward's letter to his father, but he was not a party to Mr. Ryland's inspection of it.

"If a lurking suspicion of his honesty remains, I do him injustice." The passage upon which Mr. Ryland's finger rested, and which brought, even in the silence of his own room, the quick blood into his bronzed cheek was—

"No wealth can ever make up for that best and noblest of all patrimony, the integrity of a parent. That security which is purchased at the expense of principle rests upon most unstable grounds."

Of Mr. Ryland directly little was said, but

that little conveyed all that was necessary to say. "Mr. Ryland's confidence in us, even now, places us under obligations to fidelity weighty as commands from heaven."

Mr. Ryland went with this letter in his hand to Edward's room. The latter was sitting at a table finishing a sketch of the Alegria ravine and quinta. His cheek flushed as Mr. Ryland approached him and gave him his letter. Before Edward could remark upon the singularity of its being in his possession, Mr. Ryland addressed him—

"Do you really feel equal to this task? I warn you of failure. The turn of your mind is against you—imaginative — demonstrative — ardent—hopeful. Well!—well! I do not sneer. But, Mr. Graham, faith in you begets not trust from the world. Worldly men are jealous of supposing their kind ever act upon disinterested motives. They would scout your high-toned theories with a jeering laugh: I fear to risk so much—my wealth, your all—and more than this to you,—your honourable sentiments and

innate love of right, in this fight against the craft, the cunning, the experience of knaves—or at best, coarse, unfeeling men. I am your best friend in advising you to abandon your project. Keep what you have, in the name of common sense; save yourself from mortification and disappointment, and remain in this lovely island in peace and enjoyment."

"Argue not so, I implore you," cried Edward. "You do not know me; indeed you do not, if you think I shall falter in the task I have marked out. My mind is strong in its hope to accomplish my purpose; my heart is earnest in its ambition."

"And if you fail," observed Mr. Ryland, thoughtfully, regarding his companion; "for I warn you, the most honest efforts for success are often futile,—are you armed with courage for defeat?"

"I will not think of defeat. I will banish the word from my vocabulary. I shall be strong. If down, I shall not know it, except by rising again." Sobering a little, Edward added—"I

know the difficulties I shall have to encounter; days of toil and nights of thought, but success is before me. I see it in vision, both waking and sleeping. Accede, my dear sir, to my prayer: take away every comfort from me but this, and I will prove my gratitude."

"Every comfort, Mr. Graham? Remember you speak to a man who will hold you to your word."

"I have said," replid Edward, sadly, after grave reflection.

"Very well. You are aware my words contain a significant meaning, and I suppose we understand one another."

"I understand *you*," was all Edward said; he could not say more. He knew not yet how much he had to learn, before he could really say *he* understood the bitterness in the promise Mr. Ryland had so suddenly, so unexpectedly, so ungenerously extracted from him. Miss Weston's words, "Minnie's destiny is not your destiny," came again to his mind; and now even the grave doubt which rested upon Minnie's connection with Mr. Ryland was forgotten. His

heart was wrung with anguish. There was a din within his mind, a hurrying to and fro of agitating thoughts. He needed fortitude to endure his own fate, while his destiny called for courage to assail the wrongs of others. Mr. Ryland was not unobservant of Edward's emotion.

"I will accede to your wishes, Mr. Graham," he said, "trusting in your pledge to do right. I warn, you, however, that to *act* rightly is no easy task when temptation applies its goad. There is nothing more agreeable in prospect than to do rightly, but, like some distant landscapes, the beauty disappoints one upon a close inspection. I will have *my* letters ready for England in an hour or so, when I will make you acquainted with their contents."

As Edward left his room and sought the garden, deeper and deeper came a feeling of loneliness over heart and soul. He had gained his end with Mr. Ryland; he was able to prove to his father the extent of his filial devotion—but at what cost? His love for Minnie had been to him friend, society, ambition. Through life she

had been to him the rich and glowing morning, from the heart of which the sun of his existence rose. He had talked little of her influence, her all prevailing power over him; yet with all his nerve and physical courage, before this power of the gentle girl, he was a very child; the more gentle, the more she reposed in him, the more did she reveal by action, look, or tone, that she was his. And he was to resign this sole blessing of life, and be strong! But strong at this moment he could not be. What he suffered was no swift storm of feeling, such as might have been expected from his impetuous nature; but a dark, leaden, benumbing emotion; a hotness of the brain, that burned in the eyeballs; while all around him looked dreamy and vague; all within him dim, as in a sun's eclipse. He was not unobserved. Ada and Minnie were sitting in the Mirante; the former weaving a wreath from the white banksias and scarlet geraniums which bloomed around them. When finished she placed it on her companion's brow, and, when she had arranged it to her liking, was on the

point of leaving the Mirante, when she espied Edward approaching. She watched him for a minute, the olive of her face flushed, her eyes flashed, and a strange light suffused them as she muttered—

"The demon was right. The talk *has* ended darkly. I saw my father going to him, but he shall not break *their* hearts," and she stepped up to Edward as he was passing, took his hand, and said—"Poor Feramorz!" and drew him to the Mirante.

Minnie looked up; a bright glow suffused her cheek: but as Ada placed the hand she held in hers, and then flitted away, emotion not unmingled with apprehension and alarm, was visible in her countenance. For a short space, Edward was silent; then, still holding the hand which rested *so* still in his, he said with a voice blended of strength and an effort to be strong:

"I have to entreat you, dear Minnie, to be strong; to aid me to be strong, as you did when, in my youth, alternately aspiring and desponding, impetuous and self-willed, you said, 'For

my sake, Edward'"——he paused, for his voice faltered sadly, and Minnie knew not what to think—"The spirit of that love, Minnie," he pursued, "which began in our childhood, and has lived through youth and will live to my dying day, is not weakness but strength. I say strength, Minnie, for it has taught me endurance and self-denial; and now it must school me in a higher lesson. You must aid in this schooling, for I must learn, in the purest sense, *devotion* in 'love.'"

"Devotion, Edward! I have never doubted it," fell from Minnie's lips.

"At this season" (it was Easter-time), pursued Edward, "the full force of such devotion speaks to us from the holiest life. How vast the reward it must bring with it! To resign for the happiness and prosperity of another——"

"Edward!" burst from Minnie's lips, and her hand was upon his arm.

"——all that we most dearly love, all that we have treasured with a miser's care, dearer by far than life, to feel oneself alone, to suffer for another, to know that in doing so we have

done our duty: is there not something in such a thought to soften, lighten the blow—to reconcile one to the sacrifice?"

Minnie's head had sunk upon his hand. Edward was looking before him. Gently disengaging his hand, he stood up, and said, with gasping breath—

"So it must be with us. I have said it. Your destiny is not my destiny; the dream is ended."

Edward was gone. Minnie's eyes followed him down the garden walk, and even after his figure was lost to sight her eyes rested where it had last been. It was a quiet look, a calm quiet face, with the light of her simple trusting heart shining tenderly through it. Then there came an expression of seriousness—of sorrow; and the orphan look, before mentioned, stood forth in touching relief.

"Poor Edward! his head is ill again." This was all she said. She took the wreath from her brow, held it in her hand for a moment, and then let it drop from her nerveless fingers to the ground.

Edward did not go far when he left Minnie.

There was a rough gothic seat at the end of the garden, beneath a spreading mango-tree, and upon it he sank down, and strange lights passed over his soul like cloud-shadows over the earth. He muttered forth his anguish, his sense of the beauty of his loss, the harshness of his fate; his breast heaved, his lips quivered, and bitter tears gushed through the fingers which covered his eyes. Suddenly his hand left his face, his brow knit, his eye flashed, and every nerve and fibre of his body seemed to swell, as he sprang upon his feet, and cried—

"What have I done that thou shouldst torture me thus? For the hope of saving to thee thy paltry gold, did I not brave my father's anger? Did I not offer to sacrifice my all, all but one secret hope, and thou wouldst have that too?"

"What is this I hear?" said a hard, clear voice, in Edward's ear. It was Mr. Ryland who spoke; and he added, as he parted the leaves and stood by Edward: "Listeners seldom, &c., Mr. Graham; but my eavesdropping was undesigned, I assure you. You are excited, and I have no

right to comment upon that which was not intended for my ear. Look: what think you of this pageant?"

Edward, being at first startled and confused, was glad to escape from the awkwardness of his position by complying with his companion's request.

Down the cool green glade, from a mountain church, beneath the illuminated leaves of the bursting vines, in the glimmering fretwork of sunshine and leafy shadow, came a procession of priests with banners. Peasants, hat in hand, moved with reverence in the rear; the priests were chanting a solemn psalm. As the procession drew near, Edward's eyes were riveted upon a wooden image, borne aloft after the banners. It was an image of our Saviour upon the Cross. The crown of thorns, the bowed head, the contortion, the red paint to represent the drops of blood—alas! the mockery! There was nothing of the God-likeness of the world Saviour here; and Edward shuddered, veiling the sight with his hands, until what seemed to him a wretched

pageant had passed. Yet even whilst he stood thus, the remarks he had made to Minnie touching the *devotion* of affection returned forcibly, almost reproachfully, to his mind. A light touch was upon his shoulder, and a quiet voice said—

"Know your own cross, and bear it meekly, if you would aspire to be strong."

"Could you be disappointed and still be strong?" asked Edward, bitterly. Mr. Ryland smiled, not as if he had much motive for so doing, nor as if he was angry: what he really felt no one could have said.

"You have tempted me to the trial, Mr. Graham," was the answer, "but I came out to speak with you upon other matters—my letters to your father and my solicitor. Shall I tell you what I have said?"

Edward said, "Thank you," with the best grace he could.

Mr. Ryland commenced reading his letters, with his back to the wall, and Edward stood listening. The purport of Mr. Ryland's letter to Mr. Graham was this. A system of retrench-

ment was to be laid down; and not a penny was to be drawn from the business to meet other than a legitimate expenditure. The railway ventures were to be closed, even at a sacrifice. The good scrip was to be sold to meet the responsibilities the bad had entailed upon its holder; if cash was wanted, Edward's money was to supply it; but if not, it was to go to liquidate the other responsibilities of the firm. If matters were still more desperate, and money yet needed, then the proceeds of certain cargoes on their way to England, owned by Mr. Ryland, and consigned as usual to the firm, were to be used for this purpose; in this instance, however, with the assent and the supervision of Mr. Ryland's lawyer, who would then obtain a lien upon the house and household effects in Grosvenor Square, as security. Should these proceeds of cargo not be needed, the amount realized was to pass into the hands of the firm, to give impetus to its operations. Edward was to be admitted a partner, with recognised power to advise, arrange, project for its good; and during his short absence from England, Ellis was to act

as his deputy. If Mr. Graham assented to these proposals, Mr. Ryland would leave the amount in dispute, the 23,000*l.*, in the firm for ten years: to be liquidated by instalments after the first two years had passed. The remainder, after the first instalment, was to bear the common money rate of interest; but for the two years Mr. Ryland agreed to forego all call upon principal or interest, solely through a desire to advance the efficient working of the plan under question. The letter concluded with—

"I have acted with this liberality towards you to requite your son's confidence in me,—exhibited in the course of conduct he has pursued. The self-abnegation and the thought he has brought to bear for the sole purpose of restoring to me that which appeared well-nigh sacrificed, merit my gratitude and admiration."

A postscript was added:

"If common sense guides you, as I hope it will, let Mr. Slivery's claims or liabilities, over which he has authority, or of which he has knowledge, be arranged at once."

Mr. Ryland did not say a word relative to the misuse of the money which he had commissioned Mr. Graham to invest in names with which he had supplied him. In this he evinced his worldly acumen. He claimed Mr. Graham as his debtor for the whole sum which stood to his credit in the merchant's books, irrespective of after transactions with the capital.

"He owed me 23,000*l.*," argued Mr. Ryland. "I requested him to invest the amount. *He did not do so.* He owes me the money still; that is common sense, if not law." In thus excluding, at this stage of the business, Sir George Elpingstone from the connection, he was perhaps as much guided by personal as by pecuniary motives. The very thought of Elpingstone, with all Mr. Ryland's personal nerve and world-craft, was an incubus upon his heart and brain from which he could not escape.

After Mr. Ryland had concluded his letter, he said:

"If my proposals, Mr. Graham, are accepted in the right spirit, I think we shall place matters

in Mincing Lane upon a decent footing. I might as well look hopefully upon the affair, since I have accepted the endorsement upon the old copy-book."

Edward smiled painfully. The temper had gone like the pang from a sudden burn, but the wound remained.

"The terms are most liberal," he said; "far more so than we have any right to expect. That you would forbear was all I anticipated. Indeed, I am very grateful. Pardon me," he cried, with sudden emotion, and every word quivered from the heart, "you *are indeed better than you seem.*"

"My poor boy!" dropped, as it were involuntarily, from Mr. Ryland's lips. Then he pulled himself up sharply, frowned, bit his lip, and said rather roughly, "Your father, Mr. Graham, will scout my fair proposals."

"No—no!" cried Edward, the glow which the former words had brought to the brow suddenly dying away. "I am sure he will see

in your liberality a means of escape from his present perilous position."

"I do not know," was Mr. Ryland's rejoinder. "It is less easy to escape from wrong-doing than to fall into it. However, I have acted upon your suggestions. We, in fact, sink or swim together. We are partners, henceforth, in adversity or prosperity; and we shall see if there is sound wisdom in honest thinking. I mistrust the world and worldly men, Mr. Graham. I have reason. Pardon me, if I say I mistrust your father. The merchant who rashly speculates, or speculates at all, with the property of his client, is in my eyes a worse kind of gambler than he who frequents the gaming-table. The latter risks his own money, his own peace of mind and happiness: and if he loses, he defrauds no one: no one shares his destitution even if he goes forth from the devil's playground with not a rupee in his pocket; but the former involves others in his ventures, brings ruin upon them, sacrifices his honour in the betrayal of trust. The professional

gambler may be a gentleman; is not, through his practices, of necessity a thief; but we cannot say the same of the merchant-gambler—the man who is trusted by the community, and looked up to as respectable because he apes *the thing* which, in his conscience, he knows he is not. The gambling merchant—banker, trader—makes his ventures, generally speaking, with that which is not his own. He pockets the gains; and if he loses—and the odds are that he does lose—he drags those who have trusted him down with him. Then, instead of paying the penalty of his crime by a life of penal servitude, he pays perhaps a few shillings in the pound to those who had trusted him with the twenty, and resumes his place in the commercial world. 'Poor Mr. A has been unfortunate,' say the unfleeced public; while he—the victim of the imposture—is left to ruminate in sorrow on the gross and flagrant violation of his trust."

Noticing the natural uneasiness of his companion in listening to remarks which bore upon his father's imprudence, Mr. Ryland added—

"We cannot recal the past. The prudence of the present must be the safeguard of the future. Now let us take our letters to the Consulate. The mail sails this afternoon."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Upon the first of May—many a visitor to Madeira knows the pleasant fact—there was *the* party at Mr. Trevor's, at Camacha; and as our Vigia friends had received an invitation, arrangements were made for a trip over the hills. But when they met at the breakfast-table, a little earlier than usual, Minnie was absent; and as her absence continued, Mr. Ryland asked the cause.

"I have not seen her this morning," Miss Weston said. "I will send and inquire after her." Just then a servant entered, looking alarmed.

"Please, ma'am," she said, "do come to Miss Seaton's room. I do not like her looks."

Miss Weston was gone in an instant. Edward hastily left his seat and was half across the room,

when he suddenly stopped, as if an iron bar had impeded his progress, and stood motionless.

Ada laughed her sharp and snapping laugh. Edward turned, and in spite of Mr. Ryland's stern scrutiny, bent a look upon her which she had never seen in his face before, as he said—

"Laughter at the present moment, Miss Ryland, is not foolish: it is heartless." A dark frown passed over Ada's features, and her eyes scintillated with passion under this stern rebuke. She appeared to gasp for breath; and although her lips parted several times as if she was going to speak, she remained silent.

"Do *you* know anything of this sudden indisposition?" asked Mr. Ryland, bending a keen gaze upon Ada. Ada's face abated nothing of its fiery—passionate look. To her father's abrupt question she answered—

"I saw her an hour ago, when I was under the influence of my evil star. I told her so: and she trembled and covered her face."

"You shall associate with her no longer if you vex her with your absurd illusions."

A flood of burning light rushed over Ada's countenance, and her eyes met her father's angry glance steadily.

"Absurd illusions! You will see. As for *her*, I never asked—wished—to be her associate."

Mr. Ryland spoke angrily, in a strange tongue.

"I know it," was Ada's answer, her wild eyes suddenly filling with tears. "I am like my mother, and she, you say, was a curse to you. She is dead. I fill her place." Ominous words, spoken not in anger, nor altogether in sadness. There was a sort of superstition in the voice which concealed the sadness better than it did the bitterness of the feeling that prompted her to say what she did. When she had spoken, she drew her dark mantle over her head, and walked out of the house.

A few minutes of painful silence passed, when Miss Weston returned, bringing Minnie with her. Poor Minnie looked like a flower suddenly withered. The soft bloom was gone from her cheek; the smile, which used to flit so sweetly and changefully about her lip, was now altogether

gone: the eye looked bewildered: and those sunny locks, untended, were less an ornament than a sign that, from some sudden, mysterious cause, poor Minnie's heart and brain had lost their inward light. As Miss Weston placed her by her side, and looked at Mr. Ryland with a face expressive of the deepest pain, he said—

"Pray—pray, what does this mean? Will no one speak?"

Poor Miss Weston could not. All eyes were bent on Minnie. Sometimes her lips were half-parted and motionless; sometimes firmly closed, but moving like those of one talking through a dream. At length "Ada" was just audible.

Mr. Ryland rose from his seat, and went to her side: taking her nerveless hand in his, he said, "What ails you, dear Minnie?—speak to me, pray."

She looked up at him, and said, "Good morning," quite mechanically.

The old blush was gone; the sweet, earnest expression, when she looked into his face, was dead; the hand he held was cold as marble.

The breakfast went on. They all thought it best to wait a little before they decided what to do, especially as Minnie accepted a cup of tea and drank it, which gave them a little relief. At last Ada passed on the terrace. Minnie saw her, and for the first time evinced emotion. She started like a bird frightened at a foot-fall, and then buried her face in her hands. Camacha was given up. Mr. Ryland suggested that Minnie should be taken to her own room, and Dr. A. sent for. Miss Weston acquiesced, and said—

"It was her wish to come down. She has been more strange since than when I first went to her, or I should not have complied with her request. I cannot understand it in the least—in one night so dire a change!"

Miss Weston would have been surprised no longer had she known what her darling had endured during the past twelve hours. While she rose and prepared to remove her, Minnie's eyes were fixed, with flickering sensibility, on Edward's troubled face. Edward noticed her look. He could endure his position no longer,

and suddenly rose to leave the room, when he thought he saw her lips move, and that she seemed to wish to speak to him. In an instant he was by her side, with his hands held out to her. She extended hers, and grasped them.

"Thank you, Edward," she said, trembling like a leaf, "think of Alegria sometimes, and love dear mamma ever."

Edward could not answer, as he gazed into those mournful blue eyes. He moved away with an almost bursting heart, and the rebellious thought came, that there was nothing but misery for him, turn which way he would.

Minnie was led back to her room. She offered no opposition, although she said she was not very ill, only her head was strange. A grave and agitating morning followed. Dr. A. came. He was as much puzzled as the rest. His patient was to be kept quiet. Only Miss Ryland and Miss Weston were to see her, and he would order a composing draught. When Minnie heard this, for the first time she spoke earnestly:—

"Not, Ada, mamma. You—yes; but not Ada!

Let me be alone with you, or my heart will burst. Oh! let us go away together—away from all this—away from Edward—or I shall be mad!"

Miss Weston was now more astonished than ever; but she made no reply. She watched throughout the day, with even more than her old tenderness, over her afflicted *protégée*. The day following, Minnie seemed to have regained a slight degree of self-possession. Still there was a certain tremulousness and alarm in manner and countenance very affecting to behold. At times it was evident she strove to overcome this strange visitation, but her strength of will was not of long duration. After an effort to be calm and composed, she sank back into herself with a shudder; then grew abstracted—silent; and when least observed, hastened away to her room; then quitted it almost directly, as if afraid to remain alone. So it was for several days. Her mind evidently retained sufficient light to show her the maze in which she was wandering, but it had lost the clue or courage to guide her out of

it. Miss Weston watched over her darling with a sympathy that grew painfully earnest, but she was unable to pierce to the source of her strange disorder. As Minnie again moved about in the household, she appeared to *watch* Edward as she had never done before; but when he went up to her, and strove to evince, by a few guarded, well-chosen words, his deep sympathy, a flush mounted to her temples and her heart seemed to beat so violently that she could scarcely breathe. Ada appeared singularly estranged from her companion. When she did speak to her, or chanced to be in her society, there was a strange significance in her voice; and when she moved away, the drawing of a long breath plainly intimated that Minnie was relieved from a burden which had been almost intolerable. Long, often, and earnest were the conversations held between Mr. Ryland and Miss Weston about Minnie.

"I am more astonished and perplexed than I can express," Mr. Ryland said. "Cannot you guess any cause?"

Miss Weston could not.

"Had Ada, Miss Weston, subjected us to a mysterious trial of this sort, I should not have been surprised; but for this even-tempered, trusting, joyous-hearted girl to sink into a condition so deplorable, is, to say the least, very astonishing."

"Until now, I have known every secret of her heart. Now, when I look into her pale cheeks, and see those sweet eyes darkened ——" Miss Weston could not proceed.

"Do you think your nephew has anything to do with it? I have observed him in her society. When they are together, although he does not speak to her, he seems unaware of any other presence. I have my suspicions. If they are true, then all his brave words and promises are nought."

Miss Weston was changed to Aunt Mary in a moment.

"Promises, Mr. Ryland!—What right have you to exact promises from him?"

"Come, dear madam, we must not quarrel. We have all our trials."

"True, Mr. Ryland, true; but speak not reproachfully of Edward. Soon perhaps—God knows—soon he may be my all, and you know not the bond which unites us." Miss Weston paused, repressed her tears with a bitter sigh, and observed more calmly: "Edward is not to blame. I know his surprise is as genuine as his grief. You may close his lips, but you cannot close his heart. I see into it as clearly as through yonder pane of glass; and I will stake my life on this, that he is innocent of your suspicions."

"And Ada, Miss Weston?—Come, let us be frank with each other. The best of my future happiness is bound up with that of your sweet *protégée*."

"Of Ada! I am not so sure of her. I never condemn on supposition. I must have facts to guide me."

Mr. Ryland was silent. His heart was ready to believe that Ada was innocent of *malice prepense* towards Minnie; still he could not avoid noticing that Ada kept away from him—her

usual course when she wished to avoid being questioned by him—and that her manner was less equal than it had been for some time past. Ada now sought Edward's society more than ever. When Minnie saw them together, she fluttered about somewhere within sight, watching them—yes, unmistakeably watching them—never joining them; and acting, as she moved here and there within sight of them, in a way so foreign to her old delicacy of feeling and sense of right, that, of the strange characteristics of her condition, this was the strangest. By this companionship, Edward gained much new insight into the peculiarities of Ada's character and prejudices. She had strange fancies about the stars. She regarded falling stars as the firebrands wherewith the good angels drove away the bad, when the latter approached too near the verge of the heavens. When, in an evening, as they were walking on the terrace, or standing by the window, they saw a phenomenon of the kind, she would say, in a rapt whisper—

"See — see! my genius is cast down again;

so sinks my hope; the hand of an evil destiny is upon me."

It is strange how powerful this presentiment of evil was over the thoughts of this wayward girl. When Ada spoke of love—and she did not hesitate to do so often—the wild enthusiasm of her nature was vividly manifest. Then the native fire of her eyes flashed with double brilliancy. A spirit vaster than her own appeared to agitate her soul, to illumine her face, to breathe an unwonted enthusiasm into gesture, word, and look; then her tongue was veined with fire, not shown in volubility, but in the vividness of the few words she did speak. As to sympathy in those pleasures and pursuits which attract the feminine mind of a well-tutored girl, Ada had none. She regarded social rules and customs with so rebellious a spirit, that it was plain, if inclination urged her, it would cost her little to act in direct defiance of them. She often made strange allusions as to Minnie's state; spoke of her in a pitying, contemptuous tone, and then flew off into another tongue,

with her face in a glow of dark, eloquent passion.

"Feramorz," she exclaimed one afternoon, as they stood together by the porch, after he had agreed to send for their horses for a ride, "your idol-sunbeam is unworthy of your love."

Edward looked up, surprised and hurt. For the first time Ada had been vulgar. He felt a sort of shock, part repugnance, part anger, thrill through him. He saw Ada's eyes fixed on him, full of scornful ridicule.

"Did you ever love, Ada?" he said, with a dry cold feeling about his lips, and something of the old sternness at his heart.

"*Once*," she cried, with haughty self-possession.

"And your feelings?"

"And then the joy of my soul was a beautiful life. I was immortal!"

"Would plain-spoken scorn of the genius of such feelings have given you no pain?"

"Are you real, Feramorz? You love her—will you ever love her?"

"Nothing has sullied—nothing will ever sully—the first love of my heart."

"Poor Feramorz! I pity you: Ada pities you!" It was all she said; and enough, or Markwell would have heard, who came abruptly upon them.

"Do you ride this afternoon, Graham?" he asked.

"No," he replied, "except it were over the pier into the sea."

"I challenge you, Feramorz. The best jewel I have, against your word, I will be first." Ada was all animation.

Edward looked madly resolute, and tempted. Had *they* been on the pier-head, he would have done it. But Minnie suddenly appeared at the window; he saw her faded, sad face, her wistful look; and in a moment his fiery resentment, his resolution to be revenged on Ada, died away, and his eyes swam in tears.

Markwell noticed all this, and was much dissatisfied with the appearance of things. He went in, and found Miss Weston; closed the door,

and brought his error of over-communicativeness to bear. Miss Weston and he were close allies.

"Miss Fennel was partly right about Graham," he said.

"You refer to ——" Miss Weston paused.

"Ada," observed Markwell.

Miss Weston shook her head.

"I am certain, in my own mind, that Graham is in high danger from Ada's fascinations. He couldn't help it! A man's will may be strong, but nature isn't, under such temptations. I saw them quarrelling just now, the precursor of loving, with natures like theirs. Miss Seaton sees what you do not see. Pardon my plainness. I have read her heart, and this is the cause of her strange disorder."

"You are in error," said Miss Weston.

"I am not," was the answer. "You will see. Graham has yielded to the spell, naturally, but unfortunately. He will now mar everything."

Markwell was strangely disturbed. He left

Vigia by the back entrance, without seeking further intercourse with its inmates; quarrelled with Harkaway down the hill, and made half a score of sober equestrians look distant, and dignified, or half in the sulks.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The letters from Madeira had reached Grosvenor Square. Mr. Graham had received them before he left home. After partially perusing them, he thrust them into his pocket, and bore them with him to Mincing Lane. Although as miserable a morning as could well be—the rain pouring down as if the weather-boat had turned keel up—Mr. Graham walked the whole way to the City. When he reached his private room, he drew the letters forth, and again perused them.

"What devil tempted you, boy, under the guise of duty, to do this?" he muttered, frowning darkly, and grinding his teeth. "To insult me with maudlin cant! 'Animated by true filial feeling,' indeed! The devil is in it, or you would not take the part of a stranger against

your father. Did I not offer you a share of my business on your coming of age? You were chary enough of your money then—then, when the amount would have made untold gold. Now you think to buy the old business cheap—a scheme, no doubt, of that close-mouthed fellow Ryland. I see it all: but I will disappoint you yet." He cast the letter from him, saying: "After thirty years' labour, this is my recompence!"

There was a pompous sort of indignant virtue in Mr. Graham's manner as he said this.

Mr. Ryland's letter was next perused. Mr. Graham swore and frowned, and called the writer by some not very complimentary names. At last he exclaimed—

"So you would take my affairs out of my hands, eh?—make me a cipher in my own house? Sacrifice everything, every chance of affairs bettering, now that the cursed railway-market is taking a turn? This is all I get for managing your troublesome business. This is all I get for my hospitable reception of you! Bah! the world reeks with ingratitude. Ellis overlooker for Ed-

ward! Upon my word, things are come to a pretty pass; as if that boy knew how to manage my affairs better than myself."

This letter was likewise cast aside. Then the angry merchant unlocked an iron safe, and took out a huge ledger—it is curious how old traders keep to such big books—and pored over its pages. At last he came to the Ryland debtor and creditor sheet, and examined it with knitted brow. The balance of the credit side was a large one, made out in Edward's figures—open, plain, and unmistakeable—22,725*l.* 17*s.* 9*d.* Mr. Graham pondered grimly over this amount: then his eye passed alike grimly to the debtor side; and, after a while, a sneering gleam of satisfaction came over his face. In his own handwriting stood the following:—"Balanced by investments in railway scrip—the sum specified—settled as per deed on Ada and Meninha Ryland; trustees, Henry Graham and Sir George Elpingstone." The contemplation of this page appeared to exercise a consoling influence over Mr. Graham's spirits. He closed the ledger, and rang a bell. Ellis ap-

peared: a man of goodly presence, with a frank countenance, lit up by clear blue eyes, and a noble head tufted with brown and silver locks: the *ensemble* denoting a young heart under a weight of sixty years. Ellis's eye fell on Edward's letter.

"I hope, sir, you have had good news of Mr. Edward?" he said, anxiously.

Mr. Graham swept off the letter with an angry air.

"You are a spy, sir!" was Mr. Graham's opening remark, as he confronted the old man with a flashing eye. "For thirty years my house has clothed you and fed you; and for this you have turned traitor. I am this day——"

"Don't speak so, Mr. Graham," interrupted the old clerk, as soon as he found speech: and his cheek glowed. "Don't, sir; at least, don't let me hear it; you *know* I am not what you say. You know that I have clothed and fed myself by my honest labour."

"Sir, I will say what I like. I am master here, and accustomed to do as I like. You have acted as a spy upon me at the instigation of my

son. I have evidence of the fact in letters I have received this morning."

"No—no! not evidence of any such fact, Mr. Graham, because it's not a fact. I am proud to be mentioned by the side of Mr. Edward, but he knows me, and knows what is true."

"You are an unmitigated humbug, sir. I will shortly rid myself of your obnoxious presence. Leave the office."

Ellis muttered something about waiting till the old gentleman's temper was cooled, and went away.

The angry merchant now wrote two notes—one to his wife, saying that he could not be present at their morning concert, and that Elpingstone must hasten to Mincing Lane as soon as possible, as he had matters of very serious moment to discuss with him. The other note was to a Mr. Hathaway, of Capel Court—a man deep, very deep, in railway matters: a man who, having nothing to lose, had swum successfully through the billows of speculation during the past autumn, and was now acting double to or for Clayworth, whose roguery was attended by

a success which threw the fortunes of Whittington of the olden tale completely into the shade. Hathaway was secretary to one good line, a director in several doubtful ones, a man of authority about all—from Aberdeen to West Cornwall. A company-maker was Hathaway. He would create an insurance office in a day or so, and bring it out quite glowing. A musician he had been, once upon a time: he played now upon ambitious men's credulity. Hathaway and Mr. Graham were not on exactly familiar terms; but although the former was on the rise in the world-market, still, in his official position, he was the humble servant of every man supposed to have money or credit.

After Mr. Graham had despatched a messenger with these notes, he walked out into the outer office, and stood amongst his clerks, nothing daunted: with his head well up, looking resolute, and excessively haughty. Indeed there was a strong, hard look about the eyes and mouth, which intimated that the "Count" was in one of his genuine queer moods. The look that

passed amongst the people was, "Look out." Mr. Graham went over divers matters very sharply, and found fault on the known principle that if not deserved to-day, it might be to-morrow.

"Any arrivals in the river, Mr. Seebright?" asked Mr. Graham, after a time.

"Not any—wind still east," was the reply, with a look that said, "You *feel* it, don't you?"

But Mr. Hathaway entered, and Mr. Graham moved off with his visitor to his private room.

When Mr. Hathaway entered it, he drew off his gloves, placed his gold-headed cane in a corner, and hung his hat upon it: then he looked about with a keen east-wind glance. Hathaway was a man of middle age and middle stature, with a pallid complexion, his hair inclining to be sandy. He wore an American chin, but no whiskers; blue cravat, of course—all sandy-haired men wear blue cravats. Hathaway's eyes were small, round, grey, and not lustreless; his hands were particularly cadaverous; they looked so soft and slimy that even the *thought* of contact was not endurable. He wore, in general demeanour, very much the

semblance of a jaunty Jesuit, well up to anything. Mr. Graham, who had learnt a little practical cunning, went on the principle that when you want to buy a man's horse you must ask to see his cow, and Hathaway was happy in humouring him. He knew which animal Mr. Graham wanted, well enough. All sorts of stock were particularly inquired after by Mr. Graham—inquired after with a solicitude about their respective positions in the market that would have justified one in thinking that Mr. Graham had acted as head muse to this disordered brotherhood, and had recently received his discharge. "Stocks" was the cow; not a word about that growing night-*mare* to his mercantile Countship, railway scrip. "Long annuities," "Terminable annuities," "Exchequer bills," "Exchequer bonds," "Brazilian four-and-a-half," "Ecuador," "Granada deferred" —here Hathaway waves a hand depreciatingly— "Portuguese," — another wave — "Sardinian," "Spanish"—a decided wave, and shake—"Venezuela," "Dutch." Indeed, Mr. Graham milked his cow dry. The quotations were low.

"A good time to buy," Mr. Hathaway said, and Mr. Graham rejoined—

"A bad time to sell."

"Sell! sell nothing in the shape of stock or *scrip* now," says Mr. Hathaway, bringing his friend to the point, his time being precious.

"Your market is recovering a little," remarks Mr. Graham, carelessly. Now he had a sight of the worst.

"In an unhealthy sense, yes. This past week some *timid* holders have forced a sale, so we are getting into a sort of position again; but for this there would be no prices, consequently no business. We have our sets of *timid* holders and our *dashing* buyers; but, between us, Mr. Graham, as for the *bonâ fide* sales of late, or even purchases, they have been few and far apart. Panics are our bitter enemies at first; but when the shock settles down to a reasonable fear or mistrust, if the strings of the puppet are well served, the pickings are not to be despised."

"I think I understand you. Your sham 'timid holders' and your sham 'dashing buyers,' enable

you to support a semblance of progress, and so now and then a good *bonâ fide* fear falls into the hands of the initiated."

"Fears and follies, Mr. Graham—fears and follies. These are your god-sends for the present. —I see much of them under divers guises in the working out of schemes and projects concocted, I have the honour to say, by myself, involving capital to the extent of 50 or 60 millions.—Of course we shall pull through by the time these admirable levers of railway progress are used up; but, as I hint, for the present we must possess an artificial instrument to enable us to bewilder that suspicious, but over intelligent authority, the public, as to our actual position. Fear, in most cases, acts beneficially. With the power of reproduction, it serves as a generative impulse. I am plain with you, Mr. Graham, because *you* are deep in with us—so essentially one of us that I think it due to you to speak plainly; for you may believe me, I do not generally express any opinion upon the legitimate position of scrip at this time."

The jaunty Jesuit! he looks keenly out of his grey eyes, and wraps himself up in an air of intense sagacity. Mr. Graham appeared in doubt how to proceed. However, as his visitor looked affectionately at his cane, and hard at his hat, he said, with tolerable *sang froid*—

"A friend of mine holds scrip to some amount in the companies over which your voice is all potent. He is in want of money, and has asked me how he can mortgage his interests—say to a third of the amount. He will pay a good commission."

Hathaway smiled and replied—

"Money—ready money—we all want it: it is difficult to say where it is all gone to. My opinion is, people bury it. What is the worth of your *friend's* stock at the present quotations?"

"I cannot say. It was purchased well, and stood him in about 40,000*l.*, the L. and Y. cost 120*l.*, the D. 90*l.*, the S. W. 75*l.*"

Mr. Hathaway turns to his pocket-book, and reads—

"The L. and Y. 42*l.*, the D. 35*l.*, the S. W.

26*l.* Perhaps I could manage a third on these respective prices." He spoke doubtfully.

"I can do better for him myself," replies Mr. Graham, looking very grim and blue.

"I should advise you not to do so, Mr. Graham. There will be a call on the L. and Y. in a fortnight; we decided upon it yesterday; they *must* be depressed further. Your friend, pardon me, must have been mad to have neglected his chance. In August last they were at 190."

Mr. Hathaway forgets that madness is oftener the consequence of error than the cause of it. Mr. Graham looked very sour. He was dealing double, but forgot it in his anger, at the imputation of madness.

"I tell you what, Mr. Hathaway," he cried, "your people may call and be d——d; I am not going to be gulled any longer. *I*, too, have some stake in the L. and Y. Clayworth let me in for that. I will call a meeting of the shareholders. We will investigate affairs. If there is conspiracy, I will uncloak it."

"And you will do this!" and Mr. Hathaway

drew one of his cadaverous-looking fingers across his own throat. "From whence have you obtained convenient supplies of late?"

The door opened whilst Mr. Hathaway was performing the suicidal pantomime, and his after remark was heard by the intruder.

"Gad, Hathaway, your motion is ominous. It is fortunate I am at hand to propose an amendment."

"Ha! Sir George, you are *so* funny," exclaims Mr. Hathaway, rising, and taking his hat and cane.

* * * * *

"So, Graham, because you cannot make a man your friend, you give him the power to be your enemy, eh?" was Elpingstone's opening remark, as he flung off a wrap-rascal.

"I took him to be my friend. He ought to be. I helped him up when he was down." Mr. Graham was quite indignant.

"Nothing riles a rogue so much as doing him a good turn. The idea of helping a Hathaway unless to serve one's own ends!—a sorry gambler

—a fellow that always stands to win. But what's in the wind, Graham? We were just looking for you and your guests, when your note arrived. I saw something was wrong, and here I am."

Elpingstone was the same as ever. What was wrong in Elpingstone was certainly invisible to human eyes.

"Read those letters," was all Mr. Graham said, as he handed them to his relative.

The pleasure-loving baronet tossed his leg over the back of a chair, and took up Edward's letter first. Elpingstone had not got far on in his task before his lips were screwed up, and his breath drawn out into a very elongated whistle. Then his cheek flushed, and the light of a pleased emotion struggled a while with ridicule in the blue eyes, and triumphed.

"Save my life, Graham, I cannot but admire Edward's sentiments. You see, he gives up everything to evince his disinterestedness."

"Of course," he went on, "it is all disgustingly unpleasant for us. I will lump a host of disagreeables under the general head of et-cæteras; still

I cannot, for my part, be guilty of the ungentlemanly error of abusing what is right because I have not the honesty to practise it."

"Business is business," cried Mr. Graham, angrily. "I never had a taste for sentiment. Read Ryland's letter. You will get off your romancing stilts then." The letter was read.

"Well?" said Mr. Graham, stopping in his walk. Elpingstone looked long into his relative's face, half sympathizingly, half-curiously; but he was silent.

"The boy has disgraced me," said the proud merchant, white from the brow to the lip with suppressed rage. "He has disgraced us all. Such propositions! Had I embezzled that Indian fellow's money, I could not be dealt more hardly by—and just at this moment, too!"

Elpingstone got on his feet, pushed back the long locks from his forehead, and, setting his teeth hard, said through them—

"This is more than half my work, Graham, and I am sorry from my heart. Some friend from hell tempted me to oppose Edward when

he spoke the truth. When you feel truth, and won't heed its warning voice, it's the devil: it's always my way."

"I did not send for you to prate about that. I know you have drawn me into the mess—let that pass. You have wits that do not desert you under *your cares.* Tell me how to act under mine, for I am unable to decide upon anything."

"Advise you! Gad, Graham, as far as I can see, things were arranged in Madeira; wisely, cleverly arranged; for you have not got rope enough allowed you to hang with, even if you would. '*Agree,*' *or a* '*foreclose:*' do you not see it? And Ryland's lawyer will be here as soon as he thinks you have digested your letters, to tell you so. Ryland was one too many for us. Still we *must* keep fair with him, or our position will be even more desperate."

"But what, in God's name, can that boy do?"

"Never half so much of a boy as you thought, Graham," replied the baronet. "Do! What has he not done already?—conquered himself, con-

quered Ryland, and saved a great smash. Do! I scarcely know what he would not do, confound it! I feel ashamed of myself. Do! Why he will cut the knot we have bungled to untie, for he has made his mind up to it. Cannot you see in his letter that he knows he is going to do it?"

"You are wonderfully forbearing and virtuous this morning."

"I made up my mind for music, and got up in gentlemanlike feelings: shaved and dressed as such, and will go through the day as such, if you please. To-morrow, to please you, I will be half tiger, half fool, if you wish." There was a crimson spot on the gay man's cheek.

"But I owe Ryland nothing," exclaimed Mr. Graham, peevishly. "The account is squared. The investment was made, not in the funds, but in scrip. I thought it best to do so. The investment will ultimately turn out well, no doubt. What right has he to complain?"

"But you see he does not complain about it—the worst part of the affair. Ryland does

not mention investment. He claims 22,725*l.* balance of account — nothing more nor less— which sum, I take it, you cannot pay. Figures! It's no good, Graham, to turn to papers. Figures are one thing, facts another."

"But my books prove the transaction. Available scrip is by me, or shall be by me, to substantiate it."

"And your instructions from Ryland touching the disposal of the money?"

"It was convenient to you to overlook them once upon a time. *He* must prove them."

"That he could do, if he liked, Graham, by putting Edward into the witness-box. Don't you remember we quarrelled with Edward on the subject? Ryland, however, will simply prove his debt. Can you dispute that?"

"One would think you were Ryland's advocate," sneered Mr. Graham.

"No, Graham. If twelve paces could do it for you, we should see if I could not aid you. Come—come, there are more ways than one of cheating the devil; but if I must have a *tête-à-tête*

with him for the purpose, I will go in at the front door, not at the back. Have you seen Ellis? The old man looked hot in the face as I shook his hand."

"I wish you would not shake hands with my clerks," growled Mr. Graham. "'Familiarity breeds contempt.'"

Elpingstone answered—

"Not that sort of familiarity, Graham,—a gentleman's deference to worth. Have you been giving Ellis a bit of your present mind?"

"Yes."

"Unwise to anger the old man. When in doubt, lead a trump. But it seems that you have nothing but the knave of spades to play—the sourest, worst-conditioned, most unamiable, ill-humoured card in the pack."

"He is at the bottom of this conspiracy," said Mr. Graham.

"No—no!" cried his companion. "The real traitor was that shabby dog '46, as you City men abridge 'Hannah Dom.' Of this I have been certain since Christmas. We made a Franken-

stein out of the elements of chance, and thought, like many others, we were to light him with an Aladdin lamp. Although I have acted on the Micawber principle, wound up accounts after my own fancy, and let loose at society, I cannot help reverting to the past autumn, and casting dirt in its teeth. Micawber's philosophy does not suit that financial Frankenstein at all. I say, Graham, I like that hit at Slivery in Ryland's letter. How easily he acquits himself of responsibility in our losses."

"My losses, Sir George, if you please."

"As you please. Perhaps, in your present humour, you will sign me a release from responsibility?"

"A man may be merry over misfortune when he has another person's shoulders to shift it to."

"Come, Graham, come! We will chat over matters by and by, when we are cool. I am going back to Grosvenor Square, and as I see a letter for Emily, may as well convey it to her."

"From another of our Madeira friends—curse the place!"

"Smother the whole Atlantic, if you like, Graham. Ah! Granny Wolf, is it? See how resolute the characters stand. Gad! we shall unearth some curious things by-and-by. What can this be about?"

So saying, Elpingstone went out of the room, looking—as he passed through the outer office, shook hands with Ellis, and had his joke with Seebright—as untroubled and pleasant a gentleman as could be met with in a day's march through any part of the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Sir George Elpingstone did not return direct to Grosvenor Square. He lunched first at his club, and did not reach home until five o'clock.

"The company gone, William?" he asked of a servant in the hall.

"*All* but Mr. Kenyon, Sir George," was the reply, and given in a tone that brought a flush into Elpingstone's cheek. Surprise it was not, nor pleasure.

Passing on to an ante-room, Elpingstone stood face to face with the Honourable Mr. Kenyon, who was wrapping up his delectable person prior to leaving the house.

Elpingstone's hand fell rather significantly on the shoulder of his quondam friend, as he said—

"Have a care, Kenyon! I don't like to see

one of our set nodding so drowsily in such close proximity to fire."

The honourable squeezed up his eyes, and nevertheless looked supercilious.

"You are *naïve*, Elpingstone. Gad! not bad that."

Elpingstone had gone on to find his sister, which he did without much trouble. Mrs. Graham was reclining on a sofa in the drawing-room. She was gracefully attired, in a light delicate green, flounced with exquisite white lace, and her dark hair was encircled with a bandeau of rich pearls.

"Oh! it is you, George," she said, languidly, as he drew near; "you were too cruel to leave me alone 'mid such arduous labours. I am so glad you are come at last! What can have detained you so long? I have been bored to death by that booby Kenyon since my guests left me. He was really more than commonly feeble."

The gay man looked at his pleasure-seeking sister with an eye that said, "You cannot deceive me, Emily."

This she saw, and understood; for she observed, blushing through her colour, but pretending to be drowsy—

"Kenyon is too selfish to be naughty. His paradise is in himself, and a source of dreadful fascination."

"At all events, I shall know how to behave, Emily, if he becomes in this house one jot less enamoured of his beloved self."

"Funny fellow!" responded Mrs. Graham; "but *for whom* is that letter? ah! it is for me: from Granny Wolf. I thought of dozing, but I must read it first; she is such fun. Why, George, you look strange. What is the matter?"

"Read, and then you will know more."

Mrs. Graham obeyed.

"Oh!" she said, carelessly, tossing the letter down, "formal enough. She wants that packet she left with me, directed to Mr. Ryland."

Elpingstone started.

"I had forgotten it. Let me see!" He spoke rapidly, yet stammered a little, as he usually did when excited.

"Troublesome fellow! but I suppose I must humour you," and Mrs. Graham went and brought the packet.

"As I hoped," Elpingstone muttered, reading the superscription. "We should never fling away a winning card. I do not like to hold this packet; still I were a fool to despise this god-send. Emily, you shall decide for me. This packet, without question, contains proof of Minnie's parentage. There must be a hitch about matters now they have met, or this would not be sent for."

"But I thought you had abandoned that fancy."

"Yes, and settled to another—a sure card."

"Then what has Minnie's parentage to do with you now? That of the other is clear enough."

"A good deal to do with all of us," answered Elpingstone, "you shall hear. Graham made me share with him in a trust over a large property Ryland requested to have settled on these two girls. You know something about it, but you do not know that that money is as good

as gone, and Ryland knows it. We are in his power. Edward has told everything. Your husband is to be superseded in the business; and Edward, throwing his money into the concern, and backed by Ryland, is to try to bring matters straight. At present, Ryland claims the amount; a turn in the scales may bring him down upon us, and such an exposure would be ruin. These papers may give us a chance. I don't like to hold them, but you see if I do not, we shall be completely at Ryland's mercy."

"Edward supersede his father!—and he is to be rewarded for his pains by the hand of the pretty Minnie? He has played his cards well. What is to become of us?" Mrs. Graham was quite awake now.

"If Graham resists, he is a ruined man, Emily; and at present he is in the mood to *hitch* the whole business. Ryland is right as Ryland, and Ryland is deep as the cleverest woman of my acquaintance. How Edward has managed him, I cannot guess, unless it's climate. We can do nothing on even terms; the prospect is pitchy."

Mrs. Graham was looking very steadily into her brother's face as he talked; then something very like wilful resolution sparkled in her eye.

"I will not live with Graham in poverty, George," she said. "I had no love for him when I married him; I have none now. If I have swallowed the pill without much a-do, it was because you and I made it pleasant with the gilding. Take that power from me, and you know what I will do."

Elpingstone's brow contracted.

"I will keep your clothes, and you must keep your reputation out of the pawnbrokers, Emily; after a while we shall see which way the wind blows. I cannot think my occupation gone yet."

Mrs. Graham had again resumed her languid air, and lounged upon the sofa.

"It's no use to faint, or to go into hysterics." Elpingstone had a horror of such things. "If you do, Emily, I will fling that vase yonder over you—water, flowers, and all. Fainting—hysterics—bah!"

"You brute, George!—you have no sympathies! What a world it is! Really my nerves are all in a twitter. Edward supersede his father!"

"But, Emily, how about this packet?"

"Keep it, George, by all means. Fling the vase, and water, and flowers, and all at it; or burn it, and everything, and everybody."

"But what will you say to 'Granny wolf?' I always had an instinctive dread of her biting us. What can you say to her to unite friendliest professions with refusal. If she suspects us, she will be like an enraged lioness."

"Leave her to me. My ill-fated condition has produced feebleness, sickness, confinement to bed. Desk robbed, or gone to Brighton. Oh! you horrid men, you give us dreadful trouble; but I will help you. I will find an idea. The right thought will come at the right time. Edward supersede his father! I must think!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

For several days following the departure from Vigia, Minnie continued in the strange state I have before described. From an explanation she shrunk with an alarm that caused Miss Weston many a thrill of anguish. At night, when Minnie hung upon that faithful shoulder, as the last "God bless you, dearest!" was whispered with tearful emphasis, she seemed half-tempted to speak; but a something seemed to rise before her vision that scared away the very thought of saying what her poor heart panted to reveal. One boon only did Minnie plead for very earnestly. It was that Mary, Miss Weston's English servant, would be sure to sleep in her room as usual. Scarcely was Mary's presence necessary. Miss Weston walked the passage the most part of the night,

and looked in many times, and hung with a heavy heart over the sweet face, and would try to form the disjointed sentences that fell from the slumberer's lips into something intelligible, that she might guess at the cause of that mysterious suffering. Was Minnie going to die? Some impulse caused her to spring from her pillow one night, throw her arms about Miss Weston's neck, and say—

"When I am dead, you will take me back to dear Alegria, mamma; and let my little pets and scholars, the village children, walk by me to my grave; and you will let *Alegria* be carved upon the headstone; for I shall be happy then."

One day Miss Weston and Minnie came home together from a visit to the burial-ground. Edward met them as they entered the house. He saw at once the traces of some unusual emotion upon their countenances. Minnie was very pale, and it was evident she had been weeping. She passed Edward without a greeting, and her aunt accompanied her to her room. Edward watched for

Miss Weston, and met her as she passed to her own chamber.

"Tell me, for heaven's sake," said he, "is she worse? What does it mean? Surely I may be told."

"No, Edward," replied his aunt. "On the contrary, I trust she will be better. The sight of the tablet you placed in the burial-ground, and of the name inscribed upon it, has saved her reason, and perhaps her life; at least, so it seems to me. She wept, and the torrent of her tears has swept some at least of the gathered shadows from her brain, and she may yet be saved."

Edward's delight was beyond expression; nor did it seek for any.

When Miss Weston reached her room, she found a letter waiting her. It was from Mrs. Graham.

"I grieve," the writer said, "I cannot comply with your request in regard to the packet. It is very unfortunate, but the fact is, I was going to run over to Paris to see my Aunt Homer, who is ill. George was to accompany me. I sent

on my luggage only the day before your letter arrived. With it was packed my private writing-desk, in which I had deposited your charge, to make sure of its being in safe keeping. Now George says he cannot accompany me, on account of some difficulties that have sprung up in Graham's affairs; so that I fear it will be many days, or weeks perhaps, before I can do as you desire. I do not understand these new troubles of Graham's. George says he must remain by him to take care of him. I am desired to say that Graham will write to Edward next post. I hope nothing has occurred between them to render reconciliation impossible. It is an unnatural thing for father and son to be at variance. George is just the same good, kind, clever, easy fellow; as much in love with himself as ever, and sceptical on no point but port wine. Our life the last month has been rather a gay one. I am, however, growing sadly tired of the frivolities of fashionable life. We dined at the Duke of Dumbfroodle's on Saturday."

More of the same pretence of familiar com-

municativeness followed, which, however, was quite lost upon Miss Weston.

In the course of the evening Mr. Ryland was admitted to Minnie's room. He remained alone with her for some time. When he left her he called Miss Weston, and said—

"Poor child! hers is a keenly sensitive heart. Her spirits are worn out with secrecy and fear. She says that her visit to the burial-ground has given her new life; and that, since I desire it, she will tell you what has affected her so strangely of late. She thinks she can tell you better than she could me, and in this I understand her. You must ever have the first claim to her confidence. I pray we have not erred in what we have done—to lose her now would be a bitter trial to me."

After a pause, Mr. Ryland added—

"Need I say I have every confidence in you?"

"I understand you, Mr. Ryland. Whatever is told me, I will reveal to you."

Miss Weston went to Minnie. When she entered the room, she saw that her darling's face

was buried in her hands, and that she was weeping. She gently took one of the pale little hands, wet with tears, and holding it between her own, wept too, because she could not help it. Minnie being now aware of her presence, turned her tearful face to her, and in a moment her head rested on that faithful bosom. Tenderly did Miss Weston gaze upon her; dearer yet, since care and sorrow had fallen upon the young heart.

"And now, dear love," said she, after the mutual emotion had subsided a little, "tell me what all this strange trouble has been about. Tell me what has occurred to scare you from yourself; to frighten you so much that even I should be a stranger to your thoughts for the past three weeks."

With her head still resting where she had laid it, Minnie answered, in a very uneven voice—

"Yes, dear mamma, I will tell you all. But I have got very weak quite suddenly; much weaker than I was this afternoon; and, therefore, if I falter much, you must not think I am hesi-

tating, only that my strength fails me. I think you must have seen," she continued, with quite a grave air, "that since Ada has been with us I have been a little unlike what I was, and I will tell you the reason, if I can. I was much scared by her odd ways in Grosvenor Square; but having great troubles on my mind, her conduct had less influence than since, and we got on pretty well. My first great terror at her was on the morning the mail arrived from England—the first after we joined you. If you remember there were letters, and Ada acted strangely about them. Her father then begged me to go to her, and exercise my good will in trying to calm her spirits. Hoping to do as he wished, I went to her room, notwithstanding I shrunk from encountering Ada. I found her in a strange attitude, whispering something in an unknown tongue, like a song or hymn; and such was the effect of what I saw and heard upon me, that I had not the power to move. Trembling and faint at heart, I sat in the room for awhile unrecognised; but when she found me there,

her bearing was such that I felt she had raised a barrier between my love and hers. Poor Ada! she has no faith in that which is the best blessing of our lives. She did once believe in a Supreme Being, and thought as her mother had taught her; but her father strove to uproot this from her mind, and to substitute the Christian creed. He did not succeed in this, and she was left worse than before; for she doubted alike the real and the unreal, the false and the true. I have said little about this to you, because I feared you would be unhappy about me, and be inclined to separate me from one to whom, notwithstanding my fear of her, I have felt in some way singularly linked. Besides, her father bade me see what I could do to comfort her, but to be secret: for if she saw we pitied her, or watched her, or mistrusted her, the result would be evil; for then her impetuous nature would be strangely excited against me. At that interview she told me things that gave me the most acute concern. She attempted to imply something wrong about you and Edward. She said her father was not your

friend, or Edward's; that he came here to watch us, and had his motive for so doing. My own mind and sympathies were strangely agitated about him, and when these remarks roused me to resist their palpable injustice, that inner emotion I could not explain or suppress commenced, and a struggle ensued between my heart and my reason that almost wore my little strength of mind away. Still I struggled to overcome every selfish thought, and hoped my best for Ada; and I went on my way, striving very much to do what was right, by forcing the strongest restraint I could upon the impulses of my own weak nature. Ada sometimes listened to me when I talked to her; but oftener called me little saint, and other such names, to hide, I think, the misery her own dark feelings caused her. When I was led to hope that I might find a parent in him whose conduct had been such a sore puzzle to me, and towards whom my nature was singularly attracted, I seemed to have the new authority of sisterhood to draw Ada from herself, and bring her to think with me."

Minnie paused here, and a glow stole over her cheek.

"Ada was nearer to me at that time than she had ever been. She divined the secret of my love for Edward, and was ever enthusiastic in her admiration of him. She talked to me of the influence of love over the natures of her own people, and its authority over herself; and at times, when she was thus speaking, her eyes gleamed with a wild, mysterious, sorrowful expression, that told me how much she felt all she said. I also felt my nature open to more thrilling, more passionate emotions, under the influence of the spirit that possessed her. My thoughts grew troubled; an unwonted tenderness filled my heart; I grew jealous, angry with Edward for his seeming coldness; then I returned to my quiet, silent love, shining in the clear sunshine of old days. Again Ada's passionate teachings disturbed me. One day, in the early part of last month, Edward came suddenly towards us, as we sat in the Mirante, in a sad, troubled mood, and Ada, without a word, drew him to me, and

placing his hand in mine, left us. I cannot tell you how I felt. I wished to say so much, but a glance at his face struck stillness on my heart and tongue. His first words, though painfully sad, were of affection, such as influenced him when he parted from us, we feared for ever. Then he changed; pride, or some feeling to which I am a stranger, gained a mastery over his affection for me, and he spoke in a way that told me the old hope must die: then he left me. I had showed him my heart was unchanged; he knows it is; but he grew distant and reserved, and my pride rose up within me, and I rebuked myself for not being able to bear his change of conduct towards me with more evenness. It was at this time I learnt fully how weak I was, and how strong my love for him. The struggle unnerved me; I started at a footfall. So it was until the night previous to the change in me that caused me so much concern ——"

Minnie suddenly stopped. Then she whispered, with a touch of her old pretty bashfulness in her manner—

"I really cannot tell you, unless you say something very real and kind, to give me confidence."

Encouraged by Miss Weston's tender response, but in a voice that sadly shook, Minnie went on:—

"It is now three or four years since I was advised by Edward, when I regretted to him the want of the art to express myself plainly in writing, to keep a sort of diary of events that occurred in the day, and to have some chat with myself in this way over them. I did so, and, in a little while, when I found I was acquiring the gift of *thinking* on paper, I talked in my diary; not only of common occurrences, but more secret impulses and feelings, that came to grow up and stand in the presence of my thoughts without my knowing how they came, or the nature of the new world they opened up for me to reflect upon. I kept this diary out of sight, even from you and Edward, for I found, on looking through it one day—when *he* made allusion to it, and I thought to let him *see* what I had done—that I had, unknown to myself at

the time, said a great deal about him; and when I had almost put it into his hands, I suddenly *felt* that I should not quite like him to know what I had said; so I shut it up more jealously than ever. I know it was very deceptive of me; I often felt it was so, but a feeling I could not conquer compelled me to conceal my diary. Then came those events that terminated in such sad trouble during the latter part of last year and the beginning of this. I talked in my diary about those things. I tore out a good deal,"—Minnie was very uneasy at this point—"but enough remained to show that I had been thinking a great deal more than I now very well understand, about one who could not have loved me as he said he did, or he would never have acted subsequently to Ada as he has done.

"Then I went on with the old subject. I said all I felt of the false treatment I experienced in Grosvenor Square. I recorded my trials in my diary, down to the evening of the day we were to spend at Camacha. As I finished my work that night, I chanced to look up suddenly, and

I found Ada standing by me, looking on with curious eyes upon my writing. I was sadly frightened; and as Ada leant forward to take up my diary, I drew it away; and, more from sudden annoyance at her intrusion than any other feeling, I put it in my desk and closed it. She went away without speaking, or having spoken a single syllable. I feared I had hurt Ada's feelings, and as I could not be comfortable under this impression without speaking to her, I went to her door; but she had locked it, and made no reply to my request for admission.

"I went back to my room, and to bed. Whilst lying in a half-waking state, I became suddenly conscious that there was a person in my room, as a light was there, and the shadow of a figure drawn out on the wall. I roused myself to see what this meant, although I was dreadfully alarmed. Ada was at my desk, reading all I had written. Were I to live a thousand years, I should never forget that moment, and what followed. The expression of Ada's face struck upon my heart, sudden, and bitter, as misery

itself. She read on, as if influenced by a curiosity from which she could not release herself; and I, influenced by something of the same feeling, kept watching her. I could have wept to see her suffering, as she read, although I knew not why she suffered. At last, with her strange scornful laugh (no English ever laugh like it), she tore some pages out. 'And is it come to this?' she said, quite loud enough for me to hear, and her wild eyes gleamed with an unnatural light, 'for this I have wept thy absence, but Ada will be revenged;' and dashing the remainder of the diary from her, she suddenly gleamed before my sight—a being of almost supernatural presence, so wild, so vengeful, so inspired with evil was her whole appearance.

"It was a dreadful moment," pursued Minnie, shuddering at the remembrance of it; "but a kind Providence endowed me with strength to seize the hand she had raised, I fear, to do me injury. I uttered a brief prayer aloud that God would save us both, and release her reason from that dread eclipse. For a moment

she recoiled, but it was only for a moment. If you had only seen her eyes, fiery with scorn, and hate, and fury of heart! And she said such bitter things. Oh! how she mocked me. Would not *one* satisfy me, he of the trader's soul and heart, who was weak enough to love a thing like me? Dared I rival her in the affections of the man who had sworn fidelity to her? She had heard something of this in Grosvenor Square, but scarcely thought, when she saw how I hung upon every word that fell from Edward's lips, that I could be so great a hypocrite. Oh! mamma," cried Minnie, as the tears burst forth, "every sorrow I have ever known put together, would be a light burden on my spirits in comparison with the emotions I felt, under those cruel, degrading charges. I could not speak. I did not weep. I did not call for help; I could not. I could not even think; but I was conscious that Ada stood there, her dark wild eyes flashing on me. I would have risen, but I could not; my frame seemed bound by chains to the spot where I lay. I strove to call upon you; I felt

the words in my mind, but they would not come to my lips. Suddenly Ada went away; and then, partly in dread and partly in desperation, I crept from my bed, with the design, I think, of escaping to your room. Alas! the door was fast. I tottered to the window, influenced by the vague idea of escape. I opened it, but at the moment I was getting through it, Ada's hand drew me back; and she said, I remember, for the cool air and exertion had restored me a little to myself, 'Silly girl! would you break your neck?' Her accents were not as they had been; they were rather low and melancholy. At least they seemed so to me, and I would have caught at less for comfort.

Ada then made me sit by her; and she spoke of her love for Sir George Elpingstone in a way I can never forget as long as I live. She told me, too, that Mrs. Graham had warned her that I was her rival in his affections; that, under my assumed innocence, I was deep and artful, having schemed to be left in Grosvenor Square on purpose to be near him. I had courage to refute

these gross aspersions. Ada rejoined: 'The only proof you can give me of your sincerity is to be silent about what has passed to-night.' Incited by my great fears, and in horror of her passion if I did not do as she asked, I promised silence. 'If I have the slightest suspicion,' said she, 'that you utter a word to my father, or Miss Weston, of what has happened, or if I see you at all disposed to do so, I will tell Edward all that I have seen, all that I have read. I will show him proof in your own handwriting that you love Sir George Elpingstone—yes, schemed for his love, whilst Edward was lonely and ill in a foreign land.' This was, of all, the most terrible of threats to me. I would sooner die, mamma, than he should hear from Ada's lips what she threatened to tell him. To have his pity in such a case—for him to think me false, and at such a time—after all that had been—oh! I would rather die, for in death there would be oblivion. But to live, and see die out all that Alegria taught me—purity, delicacy, and truth ——"

Minnie could not go on.

After a moment's pause, she continued—

"When Ada had said these things, her manner changed to tenderness. She compelled me to return to my bed, and then she sat by me, and with that soft, endearing way of hers, when she is bent on carrying a point, she talked to me until nature yielded, and I slept. My dreams were horrible. When I started wildly up, Ada's voice calmed me; nor did she leave me until the morning broke. At parting, she reminded me of my promise. When, after awhile, I left my bed, my head grew giddy, and my pulses throbbed. I stood still a minute or two, when I suddenly reeled back and sank upon the floor. After a painful effort, I got up, dressed, and sat down until you came to me. For the rest, I do not remember much. I think I struggled hard to obey Ada, but she must have misunderstood me; she must have thought I should break my promise, and consequently she assumed a manner to frighten me still more. More than once she whispered threats; and then went to Edward's side, looking back significantly;

so that I was kept in a dreadful state of fear that she would tell him. I really do not know that I can tell you any more; but, pray, mamma, do not think me silly."

Miss Weston kissed Minnie's cheek tenderly, and answered—

"Far from it, dearest, knowing you as I do; I am not at all surprised that you have suffered so much through Ada's unwarrantable persecution. Ada knew with whom she had to deal. But whence comes the courage which enables you now to break the cruel seal upon your lips?"

"From those tears this afternoon," Minnie replied. "As they fell, the gloom over my mind was dispelled. I cannot quite understand the influence that really drew them forth, nor all I saw, and heard, and felt; but if I had not wept, I am sure my brain would have burst."

After some comforting and soothing words, Miss Weston said she must go to Mr. Ryland, as he was anxiously looking for her.

"Will you tell him all?" Minnie asked, sighing deeply.

"Yes; I must."

"Then implore him, for my sake, to be forbearing with poor Ada; she is greatly to be pitied. I have remembered this all through my trial. She has a good heart, although her temper is strange: she has never known the care and tender watching you have devoted to me. Be sure and beg this boon, and then come to me, pray, for I must learn more touching that which has been shown me to-day."

Mr. Ryland listened with marked attention to Miss Weston's report. The history of Minnie's trouble was simply told, and the listener's face, when it was concluded, evinced grief rather than anger.

"In so short a time, and so much mischief done!" he said, with an air of profound melancholy. "To save one, I risked the other; and thus retribution works. Poor Ada! ours is a cheerless future; my hopes for you are frustrated. Yes, Miss Weston, I would have given her to Markwell, for I have read his character. He is a man of fine nature, possessing much good

sense, and stability of mind; a man, in spite of the idle life he has led, who has it in him to do much, if he would direct his great energy of mind in a right course. I could give her to him with confidence. She needs the sense and firm will of a man of his stamp to guide her, and develop the latent riches of her nature. But this is vain talk."

The speaker paused, and after some reflection, added—

"It was not my aim to bring such trouble to Vigia, Miss Weston, and now my way is clear. I shall remove Ada. I know her well. Absence will awaken her to a sense of her cruel conduct to Minnie, and perhaps induce her to reflect upon all that sweet girl has sought to do for her, with thoughts from which good may spring. God grant it! Whilst we are here, we shall get nothing from Grosvenor Square. I will take a trip to Spain. Mrs. Seaton's confinement took place in Seville. I may learn something of importance there, relative to the actual position of matters in as far as regards proof of Minnie's parentage;

one of the two children must have died; it does not seem natural that the two infants should be christened by the same name; nor does Seaton's conduct, in resigning the child to your care, exactly accord with a *father's* idea of things. Still there is a doubt to clear up; money well spent, backed by careful investigation, will do much. I have hopes of being able to foil the Grosvenor Square machinations. For the short period of our separation, Minnie will be safe with you. Your kind heart, dear madam, has been the home of an orphan girl. Be it so ever; nay, do not weep, Miss Weston"—the speaker's own lip was quivering. "Your path has been one of rare devotion, truth, and honour; from sins alone come sorrows that are unappeasable. I thought not of this once; I feel the fact now; and through my deep affection for my child, I am, and shall be, smitten."

After pondering a little, Mr. Ryland added, with more evenness, and like a man whose resolution is taken: "The present must be my thought. To-morrow a vessel sails for Cadiz; we go in her. I thought of making the tour of the island with Mark-

well, but I see it would be unwise—ungenerous to delay our departure. Letters will come: you have from me *carte blanche* about them. Make your nephew acquainted with their contents. I have faith in him; still you must remind him that *I hold him to his plighted word.* I must do that. My mind is firm upon the point."

"You are still unjust to him," burst from Aunt Mary's lips; "to him who deserves such true consideration. The promise was extracted from him unfairly; the fact is wringing his heart out. In your kind thoughtfulness for all else, why is the best, the truest, the most unselfish amongst us, to be excluded?"

"He is a Graham!—the son of the man who has swindled me. On this subject I am resolute. The young man is treading an honourable path. I will help him forward; I can do no more."

"Thoroughly English!" said Aunt Mary, grimly.

"How do you mean?"

"To sacrifice the hopes of children to the pride and prejudice of parents."

"It is well for the young to learn self-denial."

"Yes, as regards unlawful things. I tell you, Mr. Ryland, it is my firm belief that half the troubles of age result from the unnecessary and unnatural trials imposed on youth by arbitrary parents."

"How do you prove that?"

"Perhaps it would not be very easy to *prove* it; but thoroughly do I believe that every unjust trial to which a parent subjects his child, has its reaction. The child's trial, planted on a young heart, generates one for the parent, the bitterness of which he is sure to touch in the shape of disappointed promise, want of sympathy, errors of temper, and such like."

"And do you think the parent morally responsible for the errors of disposition in his offspring?"

"I do, decidedly. Read Lavater, Coombe, Locke, and others."

"And what if a child proves the exception—proves to possess great intellectual powers and virtues undiscoverable in the parent?"

"Nature has beneficently fostered in such a

child what lay undeveloped in the parent's being. But many a youth, who would have proved in manhood an ornament to his country, has lost his chance through the pride, prejudice, and ignorance of those who have the care of him."

Like a true woman, Miss Weston came round to the old topic, and this silenced Mr. Ryland. Seeing her advantage, she added, abruptly:

"Candidly, can you say you are not unjustly prejudiced against Edward?"

Mr. Ryland made no reply to this question, but after a moment said:

"Next month we will, if you please, return to England; I will join you there. Break this sudden resolve of mine, good Miss Weston, to poor Minnie; and I will seek Ada, and bid her prepare for the step I have determined on."

Mr. Ryland now sought Ada. She was in her room alone. The window was open, and she was sitting by it, looking up into the calm starry sky. She looked hastily round; her father approached, and her cheek grew pale; but she did not speak. After quietly contemplating her awhile, Mr.

Ryland sat down by her. Ada turned her glance upon him, and saw the sorrow in his face. Her eyes sank, and she looked conscious of the approach of a serious subject. Taking her hand gently in his, the father at last spoke of his plans. She heard him out without a word; they were to leave on the morrow, and alone. She felt now that he knew all: her head bent before him, her bosom rose and fell. She was aware that her father's eyes were on her, yet she did not venture to look into them.

"And now, dear Ada," were the father's concluding words, and they were spoken in a voice of melancholy kindness, "pray go and seek a reconciliation with your tender-hearted companion. We owe her much, Ada; how much I will one day explain to you. Let the last evening, Ada, the last we may ever spend with her, be one of love, and peace, and kind feeling." The father turned away to brush off a tear, and Ada saw the act. She took his hand and raised it to her lips; then she paused for a moment, but for a moment only. The next she

flew to Minnie's room, threw herself beside her, embraced her with the wild energy of her passionate nature, and would not believe that *they* were really reconciled until Minnie had whispered, again and again, that everything was forgotten, but the hope of her best love.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"WELL, our friends are gone," said Markwell to Edward, as they were strolling together at Vigia the day subsequent to Mr. Ryland's departure.

"As you say, they are gone," was Edward's reply.

"Well, Graham, I scarcely expected so sudden a step, although I have long given over surprise at anything. In duty bound, having been brought within the influence of Miss Ryland's bewitching devilry, I looked for something phœnix-like to be the end on't. But to go away in a mere passenger-ship, in a common boat too! really, she has lost *caste.* Had she ridden off the pier, as she so pluckily invited you to do with her the other afternoon, and swam her way to the vessel, it would have been more in character. However,

this sudden flight has caused a surprise amongst our friends in the city. Miss Fennel attributes the step to my presumption; she wonders papa's suspicions had not awakened weeks before. Poor Ada!"

"Did I not see you give Mr. Ryland the sketch I made of 'Alegria' for you?" asked Edward.

"You did; and will you be surprised when I tell you that he begged me to get you to make it?"

"Did he? Why, he has never mentioned the name of that locality in my presence."

"And never allowed me to accompany him in that mountain ramble," replied Markwell; "still, when I gave him the sketch, he said it was wonderfully life-like, and he requested me to thank you for it, and to say he highly appreciated your forbearance in not alluding to the place in his presence, after you were conscious of his melancholy associations in reference to it."

"A strange character! I cannot understand him."

Edward was silent, and his companion went on—

"I honestly confess I am sorry they are gone. They were originals both. How can I settle down to the monotony of Fanal life after being accustomed to the chamelion-like changes of that extraordinary girl? One minute, forgetting I was a man, treating me with the tenderness of a sister in good temper; another, all clouds and thunder, and no colours! It was wonderfully exciting. One could not tell if she would throw fire or cold water on one's brain. I never knew any one like her. When she was present, it was impossible to have ear or eye for any other person in the room; and yet I never saw a natural, or a playful smile, animate her features. What a keen *talker* she was, too, when she liked; and how night-silent she could be when she didn't like to talk!"

Edward made no reply. His heart was full of thoughts, of unspoken words to Minnie; and towards her they must not flow. The spring throbbed, but the fountain must remain sealed. Bitterly was he feeling his strange isolated position! He was idle, too, and Minnie ever near

him. One moment, he thought he had steeled his heart to the performance of his duty; but the next, he trembled to hear her footfall. He was lost to all strength of purpose when she was by him; and the worst of all was, Aunt Mary seemed half disposed to be revenged on Mr. Ryland by letting the young people have their way. She scarcely knew Edward's chivalrous nature—he could not take advantage of Mr. Ryland's absence. But although he could not bring himself to look upon Minnie with necessary calmness, at least he could leave Vigia; he could fly from what he could not conquer. Yet even that step will bring her closer to you, Edward. Memory does not always release the heart, when absence redeems the eye. To quote one who has closely studied the affections of man's nature—as the moon, whether visible or invisible, has power over the tides of the ocean, so to Edward the face of that sweet, still-suffering girl, whether present or absent, had power over the tides of his soul both by day and by night, both waking and sleeping. In every pale face

and blue eye, he saw a resemblance to her; and what the day denied him in reality, the night gave him in dreams.

Markwell, whether surprised or not at Edward's silence, made no comment upon it. He strolled on by his friend's side, kicking a pebble before him, and seeming as much indifferent to conversation as we could wish our agreeable acquaintances to be, when we are holding a private communion with ourselves. Presently Edward roused himself, and said with embarrassment, looking straight before him:

"Don't rate me very harshly, Markwell. Don't call me weak and foolish, but really and sincerely I must get away from this until we leave for England. You know not quite my painful position; nor how much I suffer in consequence. I *cannot* stay in this house and be firm; and therefore, as my honour is pledged, I must go. Do you condemn me?"

"I condemn you, my dear Graham! In your weakness you have more strength than I should have. I love you doubly for this weakness. No

more! not a word on this subject. *Men* shouldn't prate of love, and of its odd antics. I will arrange it all. Your room is ready at Fanal; and in a few days we will hie together over the heights to St. Anna, St. George, and St. Vincent, with the dignified resolution to remain until we choose to come back."

"Thank you, Markwell," said Edward. "You are to me what cynics call a marvel in life—a true friend! When I have done some things I must do, I shall begin to study how I can repay you for all your numerous kindnesses."

"Talking of obligation gives friendship the measles, my dear Graham. If you wish mine to be healthy ——"

"Well—well!" interrupted Edward, "healthy it must be; and I will further test its virtues in taking you for my guide to Pico Ruivo."

Under Miss Weston's judicious care, Minnie each day felt more sensitive to the genial influence of the old petting; more ready to see alleviation of the evils that had beset her, and more inclined to think that the absence of Mr.

Ryland and Ada, and Edward too for awhile, was perhaps for the best.

Edward and his friend were off to the north of the island. Glorious mountain and glade, forest and dell, my heart swells, my imagination burns at the remembrance of old companionship with you!

Letters came from the tourist. The second day had been a wet one at St. Anna, and Edward devoted a good portion of the morning to tell his friends what he had seen so far. Edward wrote of course to Miss Weston, but he knew it was all one *now* at Vigia, and if he consulted Minnie's tastes a *little* in his correspondence, we must not be severe upon him. Edward's sketch of his trip commenced with the "Rebeiro Frio;" for our friends at Vigia had accomplished the heights above "the Mount" in company with Mr. Ryland and Markwell.

"I had scarcely travelled an hour over the mountains to the east," he said, "when I was both amazed and delighted with the diversified features of scenery that the district of 'Rebeiro Frio'

presented to my vision:—a wonderful field for observation and ferns. Here I began to realize the truth of my companion's assertion, that it is in the interior of the island where the mighty works of nature are to be met; the fertile and the barren, the wide expanse and the inaccessible elevation. The mountain forests of this district are very grand, with a freshness of foliage and fertility of aspect accounted for by the waterings from the heights. 'Rebeiro Frio,' in English, is 'cold river.' The mountain springs descend through a wild ravine to the sea with impetuous violence; there is an extensive levada here, and the way in which the work has been completed instances a great deal of engineering skill. The sensations with which we behold magnificent scenery vary much, according to the position we occupy in relation to it. The sunshine and genial temperature of the valley wrap around in a mantle of pleasantness the surprise and awe excited by the majestic mountains which overtower it. When lifted up on a peak, a sense of insignificance arises which de-

presses, I might almost say, alarms the spirit; but below, while we do not admire the grandeur above us less, we are soothed and sheltered from the overhanging awe, by the enfolding arms of the genial vale."

So Edward ran on, giving a very pleasant sketch of his journey, until he was settled in comfortable quarters at the hotel at St. Anna. Edward possessed the happy art of illustrating ideas of scenery and incidents on the road by graphic sketches, which heightened the pleasure his notes afforded, by adding to their life and individuality. I cannot go so far as I should like into this trip. I have other occupation than that of the tourist before me; and, besides, a vivid sense of the pleasure to be derived from the trip in question warns me that if I get running about the chesnut groves of St. Anna, embalmed in glorious beauty, or rest on some familiar crag, or gaze with steadfast eye on the horizon of silence, solitude, and contemplation, until impression becomes so powerful that it amounts almost to pain: or hurry over hills

that command an unbroken view of the wide sea: or start in the gray dawn to behold the sun rise up, and cast its golden light on the mighty grandeur of Pico Ruivo: or rapturously contemplate the majestic wildness of the St. George ravines, expatiating on foliaged rock and crag that run westerly to St. Vincent: or fly off with glee over the spacious Paul to the Rabaçal, reposing awhile to gather up with admiration the varied beauties which the expanse of the "Serra d'Agua" unrols before the eye: if, I say, I were to give full scope to all those images of Nature's grandeur so strongly impressed upon my memory, the book I write would know no limits, and the aim of my story would be lost in the throng of magnificent scenes.

Moreover, this trip is the familiar trip of the Madeira visitor. Many who, I hope, will read my tale, have made it, and they know all about it; and those who have not, will be better pleased if I merely say, "*Pray do so,* I promise you, you will not be disappointed." Only be careful in your arrangements; select acquaintances of

congenial tastes, if it is practicable. Remember, on account of a great change in the temperature—for Funchal climate is one thing, and the climate of the north of the island another, I assure you—to observe proper precaution in reference to weather and clothing; and I have no hesitation in telling you, albeit you are acquainted with the beauties of the most varied and picturesque scenery of other lands—of Switzerland, Italy, Scotland, or North Wales,—that the trip I have mentioned presents fascinating objects, in mountain and valley, of a *oneness* of character that will hold a bright place beside those; and that you will re-enter Funchal, as Edward did, after a week's absence, improved in health, and stored with new images of nature, to be remembered with fresh delight when far different scenes render their presence most grateful.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"You appear to have received intelligence of some importance, Graham," exclaimed Markwell, after glancing at his friend's face, as he read a note just brought in from Vigia, the morning after their return from the north.

"Yes, from Vigia, as I anticipated last night, when I heard a mail had arrived. Letters are come from Grosvenor Square; I must hasten to Vigia immediately. My horse, Jose!" cried Edward to his groom, from the window.

"Directly, Senhor!" said Jose, hat in hand.

"Directly—directly! Jose."

"But, Graham, the breakfast," observed Markwell.

"Can't help it, Markwell; I will be back in an hour or two."

Away Edward went; and in a few minutes, such had been his pace over the pitched road, he stood within that residence which held the best, the dearest interests of his past, present, and future life.

The letters I have mentioned were brought forth by Miss Weston, and Edward sat down by her to peruse them. Mr. Graham's to Mr. Ryland came first under survey. In spite of Sir George Elpingstone, Mr. Graham *had* dipped his pen in the gall-pot. Thus it ran:—

"SIR, Mincing Lane, May 7th.

"I HAVE gone over the extraordinary letter you did me the honour to address to me, and I do not hesitate to say I am surprised, greatly surprised, and altogether confounded, at the nature of its contents. You speak of good intentions. I doubt them; no man can mean well who pursues so unprecedented and invidious a course. But I see you know the world! I see you are aware that my contemporaries in the City, as soon as you have given the halloo, will hound

me to a commercial death. A little while and my affairs would have recovered themselves; but since you demand a settlement, or an immediate compliance with as visionary a scheme as ever entered a man's head, I have no help for it. I must comply with your terms—hard, merciless, and cruel as they are. My son has treated me without respect, without consideration; in fact, he has behaved wretchedly ill to me. Placing filial feeling apart, he has acted as no son ever acted before. It was open for him to take part in my business more than a year ago, at a time when he might have practised his boasted disinterestedness to my advantage; at a time when his money would have placed me in a position to have met your claim without inconvenience. But, no! he bides his time, and with the aid of a stranger, topples me down. Common decency, one would have supposed, would have deterred him—tempting as the *personal* motive is—from doing me such an irreparable injury. What have I done, I am bold to ask, to be treated thus? Have I neglected the thread of my business?

Are its affairs conducted with less despatch than formerly? Have I become inert, imbecile, worthless? And yet because there is some temporary pressure in my pecuniary relations, arising from the monetary embarrassments of the past autumn, you are pleased to cast a stain on my reputation, by implying, too clearly to be misunderstood, that I am not capable of managing my own affairs. It is all vastly well, and I have done what you command. I hope you will not find you are mistaken in your visionary calculations. Mr. Ellis is now the head of my house, in close league with your lawyer, waiting the orders of the very experienced person you have thought proper to invest with supreme authority."

Noticing Edward's uneasiness, Miss Weston said:

"Do not be in a hurry, Edward, to *think* yet; let us see what the other letters say for themselves. Were your father pleased, Edward, he would not show it; he is a proud man, and an alderman to boot, and therefore thinks himself a

man of importance, so never mind unjust anger. Perhaps he thinks it necessary to assume ill-temper in order to conceal from his reason the fact of ill-conduct; some do."

"Temporary pressure, indeed!" exclaimed Aunt Mary, quoting from the letter. "This is always the tale when folly has reigned over common sense. It is his own want of probity that has brought this about, not your interference. Delay! yes, he would even now delay the day of reckoning, as all men in such a situation do, until the crushing blow falls on the innocent and guilty." Miss Weston was angry.

The next letter was from Mr. Ryland's lawyer, Mr. Graves, and written in the stunted nicety characteristic of his profession; oyster-like and close, in spite of its technical courtesy to a good client. Evidently Mr. Graves did not approve of so extended an authority being placed in the hands of the son of his client's heavy debtor; he did not say so in as many words; lawyers say almost everything but their own convictions in a few words. Their convictions are far too valuable to

see the light of day, whilst difficulties are pending. "However, as Mr. Edward Graham is to be active director of affairs, his presence is absolutely necessary," wrote Mr. Graves. "My position is a painful one; Mr. Graham is very intemperate indeed. I cannot see how matters can proceed on satisfactory grounds, until Mr. Graham, junior, stands in the responsible position of sole controller of the business-finances—an onerous position, particularly for one so closely connected with the elder Graham. Perhaps it would be prudent to induce Mr. Graham, Senior, to make over his interests in trust to his son for a given time. Then you must be secured against the possibility of the latter betraying your interests. I will do my best, but as all these arrangements, involving so heavy a sum of money, are a *little* out of the usual course of matters of this sort, I must urge upon you to delay your absence from England only for as brief a period as is convenient to you."

Nothing, it will be observed, was said in either of these letters of Sir George Elpingstone. Mr. Ryland's resolution not to recognise this second-

hand character in his affair appeared to have been met in the way he wished.

Next came Ellis's letter to Edward. How refreshing it was to Edward to see the writing of his old friend after the perusal of the other letters. Touching the necessity of Edward's return, Ellis's views coincided with those of Mr. Graves. But how differently expressed! "Come home to us, dear Mr. Edward," the old friend wrote. "Your hour is come, and your good sense and economical rules will, I believe, set matters straight; good sense and economy, Mr. Edward, the golden rules of commercial life, is what we want. Matters have gone so badly that we should have all left the house, but for the hope of your coming amongst us. We remember our pledge to you, and we are all prepared to advance your designs of restoring the business to its old position. It *was* a good business; Mr. Edward, it may be so again, if we practise good sense and economy. A thousand pities that such concerns should be ruined by rash speculations! Railway ventures have been the bane of the old house, and now matters are

so complicated that even with your money at command I am compelled to fear." The old man went on to say that the private establishment was a heavy pull upon the account. His private opinion was, that it would not be discreet to force a sale of good scrip in the then state of the railway market, although he must confess that the liabilities consequent upon the *bad* were of a character to give him a great deal of concern. Mr. Slivery had been a good deal about them lately, hinting that he was prepared, on the strength of a commission, to put the house on *a line* to avoid liability, and Ellis was sorry to say Sir George Elpingstone had pressed the acceptance of this proposal so urgently on Mr. Graham, that it occasioned Mr. Graves and himself a great deal of trouble to resist further complication. "However, I will be firm in doing as I know you would approve. Of this you may be sure." So Ellis concluded his letter.

"You are right, Ellis," was Edward's thought; "men who pay a commission to such as Slivery, to escape from the consequences of their errors,

begin the work of practical redress at the wrong end." One other letter had to be perused; this was from Mrs. Graham to Miss Weston. I really must give this effusion as it was written; to transcribe passages would spoil the harmony of it. Here is then the result of Mrs. Graham's cogitations:—

"Grosvenor Square, May 7th.

"My dear Miss Weston,

"Since my last hasty note, in which I accounted for my inability to send you the packet you requested of me, I appear to have lived a thousand years. As you perceive, I am still in England, whilst one half my wardrobe and the packet are in Paris, and when we shall be united, I am at a loss to say. We must have patience. Perhaps it would be imprudent to forward the packet now, as you may be returning so shortly, and it might reach Madeira and find you flown. Therefore, when I am again mistress of it, I will be its custodian until we meet—soon, I hope, very soon. I sadly want you by me; my household

is in sad confusion: in every way the demon of annoyance pursues me. Our friends the Sliverys have at length shown themselves up in their true colours. For some time there has been *little* ceremony growing up between us and them; but as George says, 'we have now broken the pipe of peace.' The lady presumed to constitute herself my monitress relative to certain matters personal to myself; and really went from '*I hope*, Emily,' to 'I must seriously *advise, dear* Mrs. Graham,' before I could suggest that I thought I had sufficient knowledge of the art of life to protect myself from the insinuations of friends or foes. But I will not weary you with so *triste* an affair as a quarrel with such low people as the Sliverys. They were always out of place in my set; and the worst of it is, one cannot *use* people of this sort without having one's pride wounded sooner or later. Now let us talk of ourselves. So *much* has been revealed to me since my last letter to you! When I wrote that letter, I was becoming so good, so immaterial, almost above the low pettinesses of earth; but since, I have been made quite

a business woman, and once more I am the victim of that ungracious, earthly, necessary nuisance —£ *s. d.* It is truly surprising to hear of dear Edward's wondrous improvement in health: it is very extraordinary. I hear that he is going to return home, and take the control of his father's affairs into his own hands; get rich all of a sudden, I suppose, and eventually marry Village Bird, or the wild Ada, and repair to some Arcadian retreat. Then you will abandon Alegria, for of course he cannot get on without your presence. I quite long for Edward's return! My churlish husband says that he shall never live with him; but this is absurd. *I* will take care of his interests, you may rest assured. His father is at present in a great fury with him. He says his son had no right to think or act, but as he wished. He talks of the way Edward has betrayed him, and so forth, but George stands his friend, although he inclines to the opinion that Edward had been guilty of a 'magnanimous folly.' But then the ultimate *reward*, I say. Indeed, Edward is clever. The boy-poet will prove, I opine, a very practical man;

but I should have thought Mr. Ryland too deep for him. Mr. Graham, I am sorry to say, has changed a good deal. George has quite a difficulty to keep in with him; he is always talking about bankruptcy; and oh! do you know he says 'a bankrupt never found a woman true!' The horrid man, is he not—this mercantile *sposo* of mine? It is so vulgar to lose money and temper and good breeding together! What is worse, he is growing shabby in his dress; the stiff cravat has lost its emphasis; and he really talks of curtailing his establishment, giving up the position for which we have struggled so hard, and which we have just secured: our concerts, our opera, our dinners, our sociabilities—impossible! or I must insist on a separate maintenance. I could not otherwise endure the many *désagrémens* incident on such a change."

So wrote the sinking merchant's fashionable wife.

Miss Weston tossed this letter angrily away, saying, in allusion to its ending, "'Yours very affectionately,' indeed!" but Edward took it up and ran his eye over it, and thoroughly taking it

as Mrs. Graham meant, he said with a pained expression of face:

"It is a cruel letter. I understand her: when *shall* we be fair, and just, and kind towards each other? when will social hypocrisy cease, and kindred selfishness be at an end?"

"What is it, mamma?" asked Minnie, coming up very nervously to Miss Weston, who now sat alone at the table, with the letters before her. The latter started, but Minnie went on: "I feel something is very wrong—very. I met Edward on the terrace as he came in from Mr. Markwell's, and he seemed himself almost. He spoke to me in his old candid way, and it made me *so* happy to see him natural again, for he has been so reserved of late. But he passed me a minute ago and looked so grave, almost stern, I could not speak to him. I must ask you the reason of all this change."

Miss Weston took her hands, and looking sadly into her face, said—

"Can you bear to hear the truth, dear Minnie?"

"Yes—yes! it is what I want to hear. The very worst you can tell me cannot torture me more than my own inward fancies."

"Then, Minnie, you must learn that Edward's father has dealt wrongly towards Mr. Ryland. Edward came forward, and not only cast his little fortune in the scale to save his father from exposure and ruin, but offered to take upon himself the liquidation of his father's debt by working in the business. Mr. Ryland listened to him, was won by his frank conduct, and complied with his proposals."

"Yes, Edward!" dropped from Minnie's lips.

"And," pursued Miss Weston, sinking her voice almost to a whisper, fearing perhaps to speak at all, "for this act of grace on Mr. Ryland's part, he extracted a pledge from Edward."

"Yes!" for Miss Weston stopped again.

"A promise, Minnie, that he would give up any claim to you."

Minnie just summoned strength to say—

"And Edward! he promised?"

"You must understand," said Miss Weston,

drawing the suffering girl close to her, "that Edward was influenced by a twofold motive in doing so. The first, to save his father from public infamy; the second, to restore to Mr. Ryland the money which had been intended for you, Minnie, and for Ada. Besides, Mr. Ryland, mistrusting Edward's sincerity and strength of purpose, put him to a test. Edward had said in conversation on this business, that he would make *any* sacrifice to prove his sincerity. Mr. Ryland at once requested what I have told you; but, Minnie, perhaps you are after all simply our Minnie of Alegria."

"Yes—yes, ever so!"

"Simply Minnie Seaton, over whom none but Alegria friends have authority."

"Do not say so. It is so reverently dear to my heart to think I have a living parent. I cannot resign this feeling; its influence overrules every fear, and serves to sustain me under every trial. Yet you can think that Edward will be of my thoughts. Did *you* ever love, mamma?"

The last few words took good Miss Weston

unprepared. She started as if a sudden pang had thrilled through her bosom; her lips quivered, her face turned ashy pale, and in a low, hollow voice, she said—

"Yes, Minnie, *I have loved;* and as a woman loves who builds *all* upon one hope, I revered, believed, trusted, and *he* proved unworthy. May you never know of such a trial, dear one!"

"Dear—dear mamma! I should never have thought you had been unhappy."

"It is not always those who have suffered most that are the most unhappy, Minnie."

"You think Edward has done right, mamma?"

"He has acted like himself, and bears up nobly. He will be happier when he hears you know all, and that your sympathies are with him in his great trial."

"Yes—yes! and I understand why he stays away from Vigia. I see it now, and what he meant when he spoke of the *devotion* of affection. I did not understand him then, but I do now. Edward did right, you say: then unless I do wrong *again,* there will be nothing to divide us.

We must now learn the true significance of *devotion.*"

Miss Weston gazed with an eye of wonder into her dear one's face. It looked so fair and beautifully simple.

"This sudden evidence of courage, dearest, shines upon my heart like the sunrise, and makes me hope almost involuntarily."

END OF VOL. II.

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